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DETOX Diets

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY ILAN RUBIN

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Some high-profile celebrities are unabashedly hitting the bottle. No, not hitting the bottle as in they need to check into detox—hitting the bottle as in it's their way of detoxing. They are juice fasting to cleanse their insides, which presumably improves their outsides by helping them lose weight.

The latest juice-cleanse delivery diets—such as those from Blueprint Cleanse and Organic Avenue—with their potent blends of fresh vegetables, fruits, and spices, promise a renewed vitality and better health. Last winter, when Gwyneth Paltrow was briefly in a New York hospital, she reportedly took delivery of Organic Avenue's LOVEfast, which is mainly juice with perhaps a side of seaweed salad. Last summer, Oprah Winfrey blogged about her 21-day cleanse, although—as you might expect of a woman who has publicly regretted going on a drastic four-month-long liquid weight-loss diet 20 years ago—her regimen included solid foods. These new cleanses are a marked improvement on the older detox diets, like the “master cleanse,” which offered minimal nutrition and rapid weight loss (Beyoncé was rumored to have lost more than 20 pounds for *Dreamgirls* by sipping this mixture of lemon juice, purified water, maple syrup, and cayenne pepper).

Surprisingly, most cleanses aren't touted as weight-loss programs. (Technically, anyhow: Invariably, plenty of women are still signing on in hope of dropping a few stubborn pounds.) They claim to rebalance the body, purify the liver, and regulate the digestive tract's PH balance. Or, as in the case of John Gray's 30-Day Mars Venus Wellness Solution, a detox promises to enhance your sex life. “Detoxing gives you

more energy, and more energy gives you more libido,” Gray says.

The regimens vary widely in duration and strictness: Some last just one day, whereas others stretch on for weeks. The most stringent are essentially flavored water; others offer vegetable and fruit juices; and Winfrey's plan, based on *Quantum Wellness* (Weinstein Books) by Kathy Freston, included real meals dominated by organic produce and whole grains. “As a chef and lover of food, I can't imagine an all-liquid cleanse,” says Tal Ronnen,

and raw-food devotees and “pretty much anyone with a long, gray braid,” says Zoë Sakoutis, founder of the Blueprint Cleanse. “It was either superhippie or really elitist.”

These days, though, the average Jane is increasingly taking stock of her diet and deciding to turn over a new leaf—by, say, liquefying a bushel of leafy green vegetables. Christine, a fashion stylist in New York City, likes to do a weeklong cleanse a few times a year following “some kind of food-and-drink free-for-all, like a vaca-

“My stomach is almost always bloated, but it gets flat during the cleanse.”

founder of the Veg Advantage program and Winfrey's cook during her three-week detox. “A cleanse is simply about eliminating certain foods that tend to be irritating to the body. Alcohol, sugar, animal products, and caffeine act as stimulants and depressants and exhaust the body. Cleansing gives the body a chance to heal.”

It's probably no accident that people's efforts to clean up their acts (and alimentary canals) are coinciding with the focus on cleaning up the environment. “We've all been talking about greening the planet, and now we've gotten around to talking about greening our bodies,” says Adina Niemerow, a holistic chef and author of *Super Cleanse* (HarperCollins). For centuries, people have been fasting as part of a spiritual quest. In recent decades, cleansing was embraced by yoga enthusiasts

tion, the winter holidays, an extended birthday celebration...the list goes on,” she says. “For my job, I do a lot of week-night socializing that includes wine, cheese plates, foods you pop in your mouth without even thinking.”

She's not the only one unconsciously putting things in her mouth: “People regularly consume unnatural foodstuffs that are riddled with additives, colors, artificial sugars, trans fats, fake fats, and the like. Fasting and detoxing gives the body a chance to recover,” says Yvonne Nienstadt, nutrition director at Rancho La Puerta Spa in Tecate, Mexico, who has fasted pretty much one day a week (sometimes more) for 20 years.

If you end up shedding a few pounds in the process, then all the better—at least according to the many women who are far more motivated to rid their bodies of a few

PHOTOGRAPHED BY ILAN RUBIN



no. 1

Blueprint CLEANSE

We Think You Drink.

- Romaine
- Celery
- Cucumber
- Kale
- Parsley
- Green Apple
- Spinach
- Lemon

blueprintcleanse.com
unpasteurized for your protection.

shake well.



no. 4

Blueprint CLEANSE

We Think You Drink.

- Water
- Lemon
- Cayenne
- Agave

blueprintcleanse.com
unpasteurized for your protection.

shake well.

Vegetable-and-apple juice and spicy lemonade, among the juices from Blueprint Cleanse, promise concentrated nutrients and a rest from excess.

extra pounds than of highly processed carbohydrates.

But “this really isn’t an exercise in starvation,” Niemerow says. “A cleanse pulls you out of your daily routine and is an opportunity to consciously look at what you’re consuming”—and to notice how it feels “when you take away all the foods that cause havoc on your body.”

JUICY DETAILS

For women who regularly treat their skin with ingredients like pomegranate or papaya, the way that cleanse enthusiasts describe certain foods might not seem like much of a stretch. Cucumber, for instance, supposedly “helps wash the kidney and bladder of debris,” cayenne pepper is purported

at a stretch. “I can get annoyed at having to find time to eat three meals a day [and] figure out what to eat,” she says. “I love that the juice fast extracts all the nutrients from fruits and vegetables, and I don’t have to deal with anything else.”

Which is not to suggest that cleansing is as easy as cracking open a can of V8 or as mirthful as a garden party. The side effects of ridding your diet of processed solid foods—as well as sugar, salt, caffeine, and alcohol—include headaches, moodiness, exhaustion, insomnia, and (contrary to the ablutionary connotation of the word “cleanse”) constipation.

Oh, and hunger! “We sometimes get calls from clients after the first day, and occasionally after the very first juice, telling

Detoxing becomes even more challenging when you try to keep up a social life that revolves around meeting friends for drinks and dinner—and when grabbing even a few mangy celery sticks from the crudité plate at a party is strictly verboten. Niemerow suggests thinking of a cleanse as a retreat, in which you clear your calendar and spend time on your own. Another option is to make it a group event—for instance, Blueprint Cleanse offers discounts for friends, family, and coworkers—so you have fewer temptations and built-in moral support.

Be warned, however, that there’s no competing with your man if he’s cleansing, too: Even though detoxes aren’t officially diets, men usually lose weight quickly when they cleanse. “They’re used to consuming more”—and probably consuming more crap—“so when they cut back, the results are more significant,” Sakoutis says.

“It takes about three weeks for the body to reset cravings, but once you’ve done it, the payoff is huge.”

to drain congestion, and parsley is said to purify the blood and protect the kidneys, according to the information card that accompanies the daily juices for Blueprint Cleanse.

Chlorophyll, the pigment that allows plants to convert sunlight to energy, can inspire juice fasters to wax evangelical. Doug Green, owner of New York City’s fresh-juice bar Liquiteria, believes it “can ward off inflammation, bloating, gas, and even bad breath.” (Scientists, for their part, are investigating preliminary evidence that it has anti-cancer properties.) In any case, Green points out, in general, the government recommends several servings of fruits and vegetables per day, “and it’s because certain compounds in them should be ingested.”

Time is also on juice fasters’ side: Chugging a pint of romaine-parsley-and-kale juice requires just a few minutes; preparing and consuming the equivalent seven or eight pounds of vegetables could take considerably longer. Robin, a producer in New York, likes the convenience of juice cleansing, which she does for six days

us they cannot do this,” says Erica Huss Jones, co-owner and president of Blueprint Cleanse. “But if they stick it out, by day two, people most often feel completely different.” (Side effects can be minimized, she adds, by tapering off caffeine, alcohol, and sugar a few days before the cleanse.)

NOT SO FAST

It bears mentioning that the zeal of cleanse fans should be taken with a grain of salt—preferably of the unprocessed Himalayan Pink variety. For example, chlorophyll “is not a nutrient, and a role in disease prevention or otherwise in humans is still speculative,” points out Mario Ferruzzi, an associate professor of food science and food and nutrition at Purdue University.

More to the point, to lose weight or to improve your health, you can simply modify your diet: “Instead of fasting, why not look at the way you’re eating and try to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into your meals?” asks Jonathan Waitman,

SUPER SOAKER?

Pushing a beauty product that uses crystals as the active ingredient sounds like one step from conversations with your spirit guide. And London makeup artist Mary Vango and perfumer Azzi Glasser don’t exactly dispel that hippie vibe by invoking the phrase “magical properties” when describing their Ina Crystals bath salts—a blend of 84 trace minerals they claim will provide the benefits of a three-day detox diet by “entering the body and pushing out toxins through your pores,” according to Glasser. At \$85, the crystals are a best-seller (and often sold out—with a waiting list) at SpaceNK boutiques, and they have attracted a cult

following that includes Sophie Dahl, Kylie Minogue, and Sadie Frost. But is it really possible to wash your troubles down the drain? Not according to medical experts. “It’s true that the body can excrete toxins with perspiration,” says Donald R. Smith, a professor of environmental toxicology at UC Santa Cruz, “but the magnitude of toxin removal via perspiration versus the liver or kidneys is relatively minor.” We tried it after a recent lost weekend and spent 30 minutes sitting in the prescribed six inches of body-temperature water. Alas, we felt cold, wet, and still hungover—but, for what it’s worth, we also felt slimmer. —ROBYN BROWN



an internist specializing in nutrition at New York Presbyterian Hospital/Weill-Cornell Medical Center in New York City. “You don’t need to fast and [clear] your bowels to get a clean slate,” he says. Moreover, “fruits and vegetables are a great source of vitamins and minerals. But fiber in and of itself has significant health benefits”—such as regulating blood-sugar levels—“and juicing can leave out the fiber. My main problem with detox diets, though, is that there is no real lifestyle change to feel better and live healthier when you do something for a limited time period.”

Still, devotees like Nienstadt say that detoxing periodically for one to three days keeps them on track. But she cautions, “Fasting for more than a few days depresses the metabolism,” so that in terms of weight loss, “you just gain everything back and more.” And Waitman notes

that depriving the body of energy from calories, nutrients, and electrolytes could result in exhaustion and light-headedness.

DETOX HIGH

How to account, then, for all the rave reviews and anecdotal evidence? “My skin glows when I’m cleansing,” says Robin. “And my stomach is almost always bloated, but it gets flat during the cleanse. My guess is that not having carbs or white foods in there makes it go down.”

She experiences a lift, however, in her mood and energy levels. Indeed, “energized” seems to be the operative

adjective for lots of cleanse dieters. “The first few days I have mild headaches and feel a little tired, but by midweek, I am an energy ball,” Christine says. “My apartment always gets an amazing cleanse, too, due to my energized state.” Lexy, a journalist in New York City, attests that by the end of a three-day or five-day juice fast, she sleeps better, wakes up earlier, and has more vigor at work.

A placebo effect may inspire some of these sensations, as may the sheer pride of sticking it out, but many women report another benefit: a reckoning about their usual eating. When food is off-limits—when the most fleeting fancy for a handful of Cheez-Its or steak *frites* cannot be fulfilled—it forces you to think about *why* you want what you want, and about all the habits you have that involve food but really don’t need to. “Judicious fasting,” Nienstadt says, “helps us become more sensitive to what our bodies need and don’t need.” After all, when you can go about your day—with giddyap to spare—on, for instance, Blueprint Cleanse’s most spartan menu option of 1,100 calories, it calls into question why you’d ever need a three-course meal. Or an 800-calorie tub of movie popcorn before the film even starts.

Although Christine’s intent was “to feel better and get back on track” nutritionally, she says she lost nearly five pounds in one week, “which was a bonus”—and kept the weight off. For Ronnen, whose detox diet never eliminates real food and regular meals, the primary purpose of a cleanse is “to disrupt old patterns of eating that aren’t healthy,” he says. “It takes about three weeks for the body to reset cravings, but once you’ve done it, the payoff is huge. You find that you actually start craving foods that are good for you.”

For Lexy, cleansing led to a personal ban on high-fructose corn syrup and reaffirmed her commitment to buying organic. “Doing the detox every once in a while is just a booster,” Lexy says. “It’s part of a whole journey of trying to be healthy and purifying my life.” ♦

