

Women's Health

IT'S GOOD TO BE YOU™

JUNE 2008

**LAST-MINUTE
2-WEEK PLAN!**

SUMMER SHAPE-UP!

- ✓ **BURN** MORE FAT
- ✓ **BOOST** YOUR ENERGY
- ✓ **TIGHTEN** & TONE

Got 20 Minutes?

Get A Perfect Butt!

The Secret to Faster Weight Loss

No Dieting Required!

Gorgeous Summer

Hair & Skin

Super-Healthy Salads

That Really Satisfy!

**THE 100
GREATEST
TIME-
SAVING
WEBSITES
EVER!**



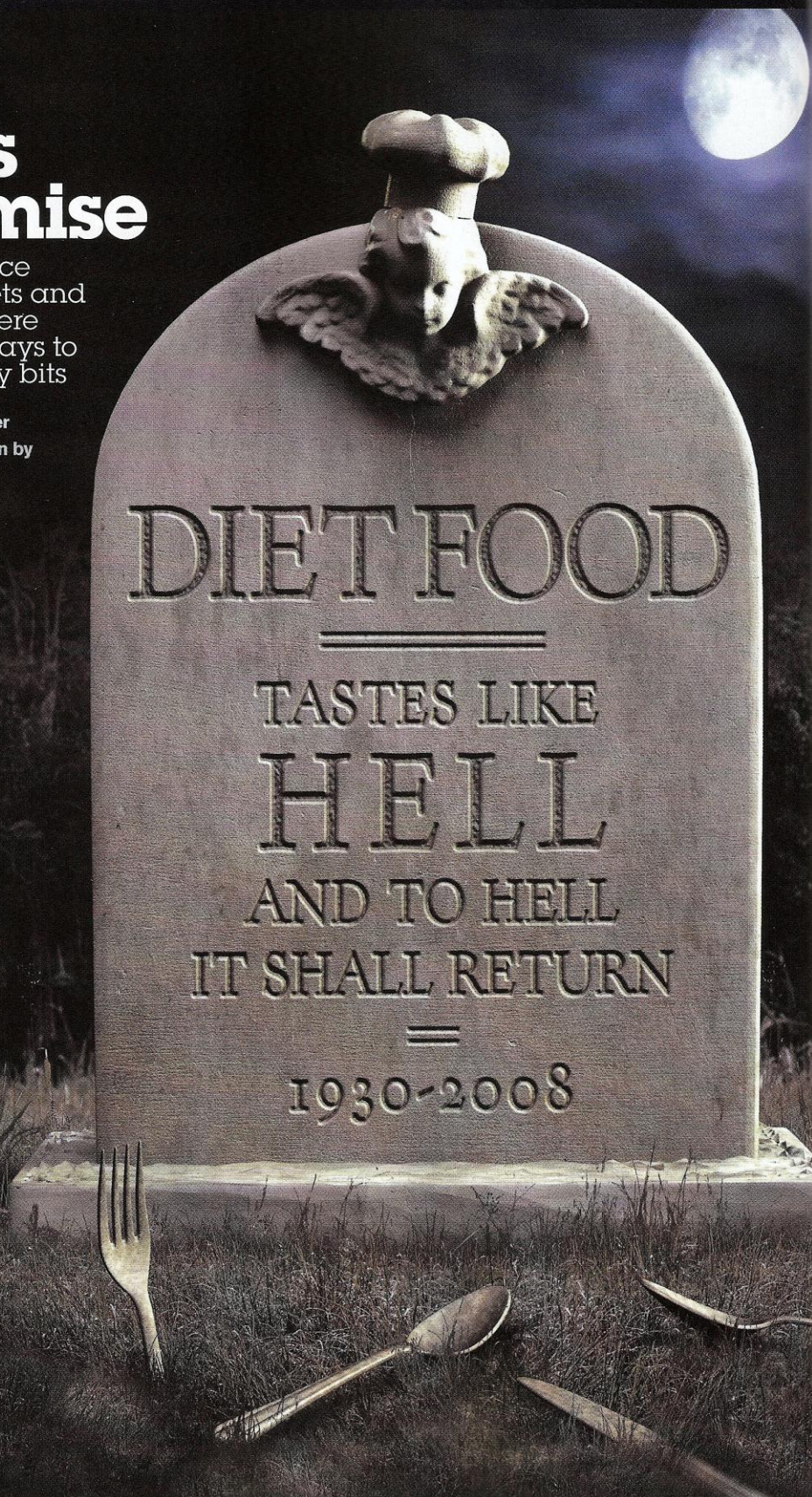
WEIGHT LOSS

diet's demise

Good riddance
to fad diets and
fake food—there
are better ways to
lose our jiggly bits

By Jill Waldbieser

Photo Illustration by
Joe Zeff Design, Inc.



Diet foods and fads: We knew you, but we didn't love you. Call us heartless, but we're happy to see you go. We could tell the end was near when we started seeing headlines like "Fad Diets Less Popular Today Than Five Years Ago" and when Weight Watchers kicked off its 2008 ad campaign, "Stop dieting. Start living." According to the Calorie Control Council (CCC), an international nonprofit representing the low-calorie and reduced-fat food and beverage industry, die-hard dieting has seen its last days—the number of Americans on restrictive meal plans, according to the CCC's national survey, has dropped from 20 percent to 13 percent since 2004, and the word *diet* is one of the least-preferred terms on nutrition labels. "Diet has a very negative connotation," says Beth Hubrich, R.D., the CCC's executive director. Now that we've wised up to the fact that there's no magical way to thinner thighs, we can say good riddance to meals that taste like the box they come in and march into bikini season with a smarter, more successful strategy for shaking off our belly jiggle once and for all.

AMERICAN HISTORY XXL

Food gimmicks and fad diets may seem as if they were spawned by Satan himself, but as far as we can tell, mere mortals are the ones to blame. The first diet book came out of London in 1864: William Banting's *A Letter on Corpulence* promoted a punitive diet of lean meats and dry toast. The first known weight-loss product was cooked up a few decades later, in 1930, in the back of an American beauty parlor: Dr. Stoll's Diet Aid, a combo of milk chocolate, starch, and an extract of roasted wheat and bran. Setting a precedent for the thousands of diet products to follow, it failed to deliver.

But the diet industry didn't truly explode until the 1980s, when several studies shifted the focus from food itself to specific components—specifically, fat, sugar, and salt. Store shelves suddenly began to spill over with fat-free, sugar-free, and low-sodium versions of favorite foods promising to help the average American girl achieve Olivia Newton-John's sticklike figure. Ironically, many of these products contained preservatives or, in the case of fat-free offerings, extra sugar, making them no less fattening than regular food. "We used to think noncaloric sweeteners were going to be the panacea that would save all of America," says James Painter, Ph.D., chair of the School of Family and Consumer Sciences at Eastern Illinois University. "But during the same period that they started being used in products, obesity was doubling in this country."

THE GREAT "LITE" HYPE

It doesn't take Alan Greenspan to decipher the cause of Americans' waist inflation. We simply have too much fattening food available all the time. "Thirty, 40 years ago, you couldn't find places where you could get food in one minute," Painter says. "Now you have to go past 1,000 drive-thrus just to buy your gas. Because we can eat whenever we want, we overeat." The antidote, until recently, has been to suddenly and severely change our eating habits to lose weight quickly—in other words, go on a diet. But here's why that strategy belongs six feet under:

» **It screws with our minds** Over the past 15 years, the number of restaurants and stores offering diet options has increased dramatically—a change that has done more harm than good. A 2006 study published in the *Journal of Marketing Research* found that we eat more calories when a food is labeled low-fat, probably because we don't experience the guilt that would otherwise

make us put on the brakes mid-binge. "People think, 'Oh, this is sugar-free or fat-free, so I can eat as much as I want,'" Painter says. Filling up on these foods (and on hope) only to end up heavier than before can be dejecting, so it's understandable that chronic dieting is linked with depression, low self-esteem, and increased stress.

» **We can't stick with it** Diets do work—while you're on them. But up to two-thirds of dieters end up heavier after five years than when they started out. And in clinical studies, the more time that passes between the end of a subject's diet and the time she's reassessed, the more weight she will have regained. The most likely reason for the rebound is that as soon as dieters stop following a strict set of rules (no eating after 7 P.M., no snacking between meals...), they lapse into the same habits that made them gain weight in the first place.

DEPRIVING YOURSELF SLOWS YOUR METABOLISM TO A SNAIL'S PACE.

» **Our bodies rebel** Depriving yourself in this way can slow your metabolism to a snail's pace and make losing weight even harder. "Once your body realizes it's not getting as much food, it starts to conserve energy," Painter says. Thanks to evolution, your inner cave girl is fattening up for what she thinks could be another ice age. Continue to starve yourself and you'll suffer from intense cravings and loss of lean body tissue, aka muscle; that further compromises your body's ability to burn calories.

» **We have a need for speed** Getting results fast is the American way, but losing more than one or two pounds a week is self-sabotage. Researchers have discovered that leptin, a hormone

WEIGHT LOSS

secreted by fat cells, helps control appetite by binding to receptors in the brain to tell you you're full. But leptin and fat are a package deal: Lose fat and you lose leptin, too. "When leptin levels are low, the body reacts by conserving energy expenditure so much that you stop burning calories at a normal rate," says Andrea Giancoli, M.P.H., R.D., national spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association. "And that triggers weight regain."

WEIGHT LOSS REBORN

As satisfying as it feels to kick the restrictive, taste-deficient, fat-obsessed plans of the past out the door, the last thing we want to do is check ourselves into the DoubleChin Hotel for life. The average adult gains about one and a half pounds every year after age 30, says John Foreyt, Ph.D., a professor of medicine and the director of the Behavioral Medicine Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. But even if their personal trainer looks like Matthew Fox, most women can't spend two or more hours a day at the gym. So how do we take a bite out of our bloat? The key, experts say, is the opposite of quick fixes and trick foods: small, gradual, healthy, permanent changes.

» **Think forever** "If you can't see yourself eating or exercising a certain way for the rest of your life—say, consuming raw food and running five miles every day—you shouldn't be doing it to lose weight in the first place," says Linda Spangle, R.N., M.A., author of *100 Days of Weight Loss*. The only changes that work are those you can continue indefinitely. If you reach your goal weight when you're hitting the gym three times a week and cooking your own meals instead of getting takeout—and those are changes you know you can live with—then

they're going to work a whole lot better than any short-term shtick. "Weight management has to be an uncompromising, non-negotiable, everyday thing, like brushing your teeth," Spangle says.

» **Think small** Before you re-vamp your eating habits, take a few weeks to write down everything you eat, Painter

niques sound insignificant, but they are the answers we're all looking for," he says.

» **Think physical** It's called the "French Paradox": the totally unfair way Parisian women linger over multi-course, *très riches* dinners, drink all the wine they want, and have dessert, yet still look great in their La Perla. The

for social reasons, or because they've had a bad day, or for comfort." To retrain yourself to heed hunger cues, imagine your stomach as a gas tank. After every bite, check in to see where the dial is hovering. Close to empty? Right in the middle? Learn to never let it push past full.

» **Think action** In an ongoing study of dieters who maintained a weight loss of 30 pounds for at least one year, 90 percent report that regular physical exercise is the key to sustaining their loss. And a study conducted at Baylor College of Medicine suggests that diet and exercise are more effective for losing and maintaining weight than diet alone. Researchers assigned 127 subjects to one of three interventions for one year: diet only, exercise only, or diet plus exercise. All participants lost similar amounts of weight in the first year, but when they were reassessed during year two, the diet-only crew gained two pounds over the weight they started at, while the groups that included exercise remained five pounds below. An exercise routine may be a bitch to start, but thanks to the happy-hormone rush we get when we break a sweat, it can quickly become a healthy addiction.

Sure, taking off the extra flab is more work than putting it on probably was, but even when the going gets tough, it's better than eating nothing but cabbage soup, avoiding the bread aisle, or choking down food you hate. "People no longer have to make themselves miserable in order to lose weight," Spangle says. In other words, dieting may be dead, but your beach-ready bod will live on. **WE**

Additional reporting by Amy Paturel, M.S., M.P.H.

EAT TO LIVE

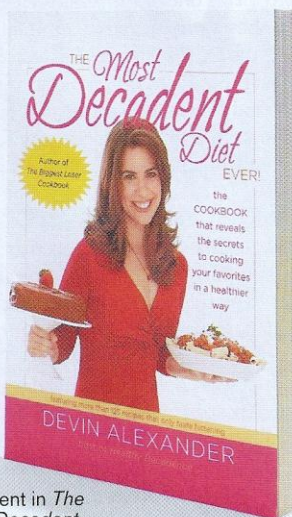
Heavenly recipes that pack flavor without fat

Yes, the title has the word *diet* in it, but you won't find any rules or restrictions here. Just the kind of small changes that turn a gut-buster of a recipe into a healthy meal that's still sinfully delicious. Pepperoni-onion pizzas, chocolate chip pancakes, and blue cheese burgers all get the skinny

treatment in *The Most Decadent Diet Ever!* (\$20, amazon.com), a new book by Devin Alexander, host of Discovery Health's *Healthy Decadence*. Alexander, who has maintained her own 55-pound weight loss for more than 15 years, takes the guesswork out of portion control with servings that

clock in at 100 to 500 calories, such as chicken pasta with vodka cream sauce (400) and a sausage biscuit sandwich (300). Even sides like basil butternut squash sound too good to be true. Pick up the book and live it up while you drop pounds for good.

—Lindsay Moyer



says. "Don't count fat, protein, calories, portions—just keep track of what you've already consumed before you put the next thing in your mouth. It gives your brain a chance to say no." Once you see it all on paper, look for small, simple ways to scale back. It's easier than you think: Switch from a roast beef sandwich on a bun with provolone and mayo to roast beef in a whole-wheat pita with light Swiss and mustard. Instead of eating cocktail peanuts, munch on pistachios that you have to peel one by one. "These small-scale tech-

reason: studies show (and you can read more about it in the Weight Loss Report on page 30), is that the French rely more on internal cues (like when they're comfortably full) and Americans rely on external cues (like when *Desperate Housewives* ends). "We're not paying attention to what we eat or how much," Spangle says, "and often, not even to whether we're really physically hungry. People eat

WANT MORE?

TO GET DEVIN'S RECIPE FOR DECEPTIVELY SKINNY FRENCH FRIES, CHECK OUT WOMENSHEALTHMAG.COM/RECIPE.

WHILE YOU'RE ONLINE, TELL US ABOUT THE CRAZIEST DIETS YOU'VE EVER TRIED AT WOMENSHEALTHMAG.COM/SOUNDOFF.