



Longevity lounger

This US nutritionist claims you can eat yourself young, says Morag Preston

Oz Garcia has landed — well, almost. In September, the American author and super-nutritionist to the stars — who counts Winona Ryder, Hilary Swank, Donna Karan and Matt Dillon among his clients — is opening a clinic in London. His mission, to help Brits live longer, healthier and prettier.

Kim Cattrall, Kyle MacLachlan, Veronica Webb and Robert De Niro are devotees. Aged 53 — with tanned, taut skin and more energy than the National Grid — Garcia is a fast-talking, speed-walking advert for his high-tech/low-tech approach to good health. "I'm detoxing, right now," he says, conspiratorially. "As I'm talking to you."

His first book, *The Balance*, which espouses a system of health and nutrition based on an individual's metabolic type, was a bestseller in the US. Since then he has written *The Healthy High Tech Body and Look and Feel Fabulous Forever*. He has another book due out early next year — *The New 50: From 50 to 35 in 9 Months* — and a clinic in New York, called the Longevity Lounge. He still manages to find time to look after 400 clients worldwide — and to run four to six miles a day.

Clients on the "platinum programme", as he jokingly refers to it, have him on call 24/7. One phoned last week from Shanghai on business, "at a loss as to what he can eat". Another call came from an anxious chef on a yacht off the coast of Turkey on behalf of his boss. "He wanted to know about a combination of wines and fish," Garcia says, laughing uproariously. His fun, down-to-earth approach is a large part of his appeal.

The decision to open an office in Mayfair came when stopovers in London, en route from New York to Moscow to see clients, turned from restorative breaks into working weekends. "Clients in America started to refer clients in London and the buzz got going," Garcia will be here once a fortnight to "craft" tailor-made programmes for his clients, overseeing everything from their caffeine intake to overall fitness. Front of shop will be a dispensary selling his own line of supplements, or "nutraceuticals".

He is astonished at how far Britain lags behind America when it comes to consumption of supplements. "It's like going from New York to California," he says. "I know I can get there 'naturally' using only my own two feet. But if I want to maximise efficiency, I'm going to take advantage of technology and fly there."

He is fascinated by science and talks about anti-ageing elixirs with the same enthusiasm as a child describing their favourite ice-cream. Cell shots, human growth hormone, laser-skin resurfacing — he recommends them all. He can even tell you about an infra-red hair dryer that dries hair fibres from the inside out to prevent frizz. Also on offer at the London clinic will be Botox injections and Isolagen, a treatment that in-

volves removing tissue from behind the neck or ear to cultivate new skin cells that are re-injected into the skin. "It rebuilds your face beautifully," he says. "I'm crazy about it."

Garcia also has a low-tech approach to good health that is more about helping his clients to understand the function of food and fitness rather than enforcing unrealistic rules. He recommends seven

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to eight hours' sleep a night, avoiding caffeine (although he concedes "a Sunday afternoon in Central Park with a newspaper and a cappuccino is a wonderful thing"), fast ing once or twice a year for two to seven days, and eating four to five meals a day. His roll call is simple: "Keep it compact, low-carb, high in omega-3 fatty acid, good lean protein and lots of vegetables."

For five years, until the early Eighties, he was a strict vegetarian. "I used to run marathons and I was losing a huge amount of weight," he says. "I was starving all the time. It wasn't until I began to reintroduce seafood into my diet that I began to feel better and run better."

He feels we Brits have a lot to learn. "In the last several months that I've been in England Atkins has been all the rage," he says. "It's hilarious because Atkins has been so deconstructed in the States. There has been such a revolution in the understanding of how you use high protein and high fat."

It is only through making mistakes that he has learnt how to optimise his own health. Born in Cuba, he moved with his family to New York as a refugee in 1961. As a fashion photographer in the Seventies, he used to suffer from debilitating migraines and no prescription drugs would help. On assignment to photograph a visiting guru, he heard the lecture that changed his life — he decided to try meditation and natural supplements. He ditched fast food for vegetarianism, and gave up smoking. The rewards were significant — for his wellbeing and career. He apprenticed himself to naturopaths and holistic healers, studied at the Hippocrates Institute in Boston, then went into business as a nutritionist in the Eighties.

According to Garcia, the biggest change most people can make to their health is to improve their fitness. He thinks exercise should be at the base of any food pyramid and recommends an hour-long session four times a week. "Whenever I'm in London, I can't wait to get on my sneakers and run through the neighbourhoods," he says, adding that his route allows



Star quality: Oz Garcia is nutritionist to Hollywood A-listers Robert De Niro, Kim Cattrall and Kyle MacLachlan



BASIC INSTINCTS

- Oz Garcia sticks to his version of a Paleotech diet, one supposedly enjoyed by cavemen before the advent of agriculture.
- He eats fish, lean game, veggies and berries.
- He opts for good carbs (rice, squash, yams) over bad (pasta, pizza, muffins.)
- Breakfast is eaten within an hour of waking, with a fruit shake, an egg-white omelette, kippers and a bowl of berries.

him a spot of window shopping at Harrods. He won't stay at a hotel that doesn't have a gym or access to a sauna. He has two deep tissue massages a week and advises his clients to have one at least twice a month.

Most of his clients aren't sick; they come to him because they are tired and stressed, and want more energy, and to shed a few pounds; they want to fight the ageing clock. To get started, they fill out a lengthy questionnaire, donate a hair swatch to test for vitamin and mineral levels, and have extensive blood tests. They range in age from 30 to 75 but a few are younger, "dragged in by their parents". Whole families, like the Italian fashion clan the Ferragamos, are cared for by him. Those not on the platinum programme check in every six months to a year. "This isn't a race," he says. "It's an educational

programme." It does not come cheap either at about \$12,000 (£6,580) a year.

For some clients, success is cutting down from eating a steak every day to one a week. For "anal and robotic" eaters, it's about a more relaxed approach to their diets; they need help introducing new foods into their spartan diets.

When he is not travelling Garcia lives on the south side of Central Park with Cosmo, his black, long-haired dachshund. They walk to work together, after Garcia's morning workout. "I don't really want to work out every day," he says, candidly. "In fact, I hate getting up. But I recognise that if I work out within the first hour of being up and I have my fruit shake, the rest of the day is sublime."

For further information, see www.ozgarcia.com