

THE DIET SECRETS OF HOLLYWOOD'S FOOD DOCTOR

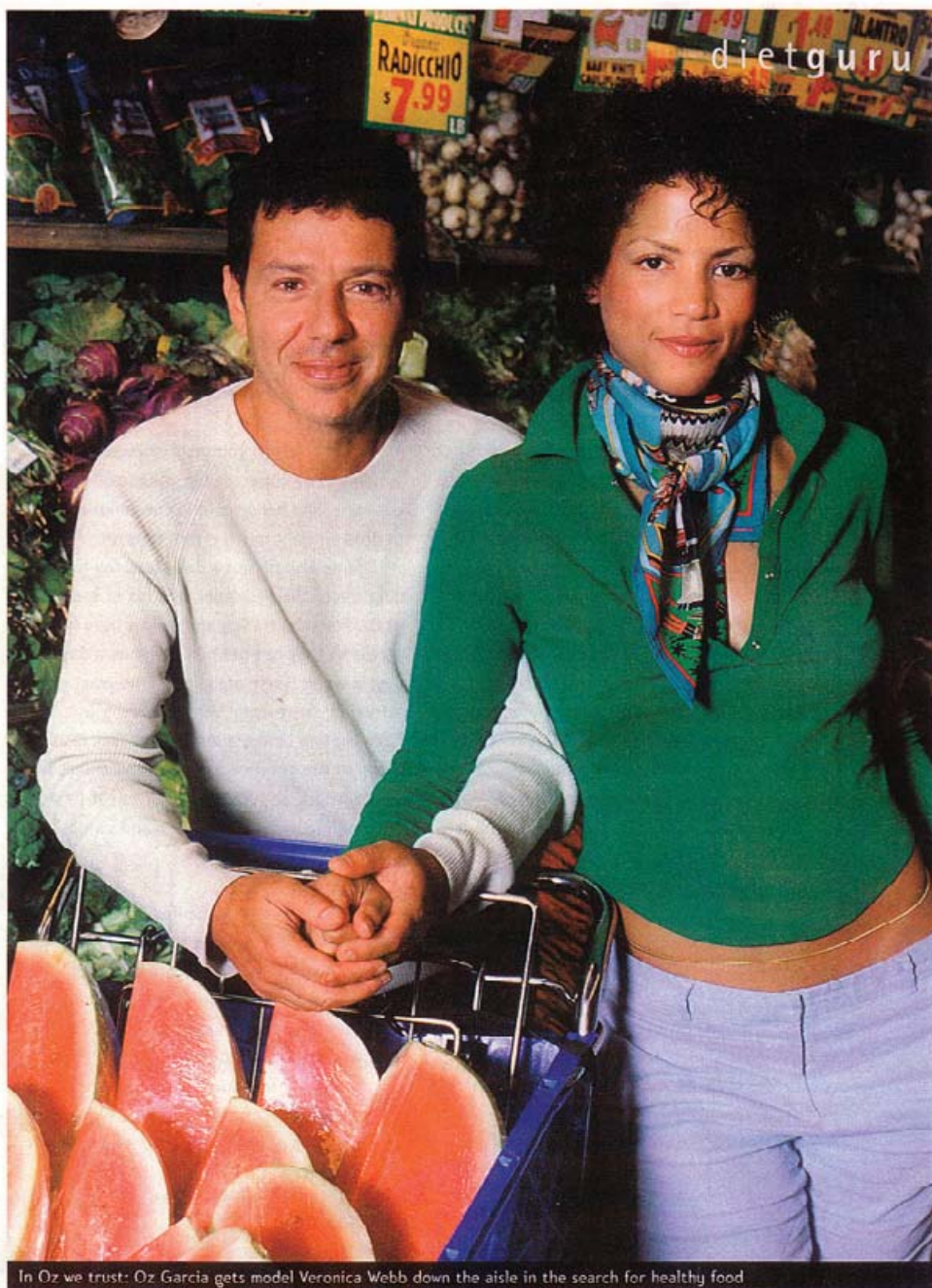
His client list not only includes supermodels Daniela Pestova and Veronica Webb, but also Robert De Niro, Donna Karan and many other celebrities he's far too discreet to name. And when Winona Ryder was feeling low on energy during a hectic filming schedule recently, she didn't call in sick, she called her nutritionist. Or rather, she called Oz Garcia. Author of the best-selling nutrition bible, *The Balance** (Element, £6.99) and food guru to most of A-list America, Oz is the first person Tinseltown calls on when a public appearance beckons and a lithe, energised look is needed – fast.

'Winona wasn't eating her meals regularly and as a result it affected her energy,' Oz, 49, says. 'I put her on a structured three-meals-a-day plan. Her programme included a variety of complex carbohydrates and grains, high-quality protein, fresh fruits and vegetables, and she also had a fresh fruit and soya milk shake every day for breakfast. Her energy levels really improved.'

Business is booming at Personal Best, Oz's Manhattan-based nutritional counselling firm. The phone rings constantly with clients demanding nutritional guidance.

MODEL DIETS

'Top models often suffer the most,' Oz reveals. 'They're in terrible condition from flying, living out of suitcases and snacking on Chinese food! The trouble is, their profession dictates they must look glowing and slender at all times. And >



In Oz we trust: Oz Garcia gets model Veronica Webb down the aisle in the search for healthy food

THE STARS WON'T EAT WITHOUT HIM

IF YOU'RE A HOLLYWOOD CELEB AND NEED TO KNOW WHAT, WHEN AND WHERE TO EAT, THERE'S ONLY ONE MAN FOR THE JOB – MEET OZ GARCIA, NUTRITIONIST TO THE STARS. BY OMEGA DOUGLAS

THE A-LIST

(Left to right) Donna Karen, Daniela Pestova, Robert De Niro and Winona Ryder – just some of the famous faces who turn to Oz in their hour of dietary need



this is where Oz steps in. 'Some celebrities put on a good public face and then go on starvation diets in private. Others are naturally slim but eat junk and feel terrible. They come here for advice on weight loss, an energy boost or a lifestyle change.'

Oz made the switch from a successful career in fashion photography to nutrition over 20 years ago, when too much partying started taking its toll. 'I suffered from debilitating migraines, which were made worse by my lifestyle,' he says. 'No doctors could help. It was only when I was asked to photograph a guru who was giving a lecture on holistic health that my life changed. I picked up some books and it wasn't long before I realised that exercise and, more importantly, food affected everything from my immunity to my cognitive capacity.' He gave up photography to work at a holistic health centre and eventually set up Personal Best.

THE A-LIST NUTRITIONIST

Models and designers were among Oz's first clients, but since he was voted best nutritionist by *New York* magazine in 1997, word has spread through Beverly Hills like wildfire. His waiting list is currently over a month long.

So good is Oz's dietary guidance, it has apparently enhanced the success of several actors, including Winona Ryder and Robert De Niro. 'Robert is very committed to taking care of himself through diet and exercise,' Oz says. 'Their professional lives improved as a result of learning to eat correctly – that is, recognising what foods were and weren't right for their metabolisms.'

At \$4,000 for a three- to six-month 'contract' you'd certainly expect improvement of some sort. During the first appointment, clients are interviewed about everything from their personal life to the number of hours they work. Hair biopsies are taken to test for possible mineral deficiencies, and blood samples collected 'to measure a person's real metabolic performance'. After that, a nutritional programme is drawn up. Oz doesn't lay down an inflexible daily menu, or put clients on calorie-controlled diets. 'Instead, I teach them how and when to eat according to their own individual

metabolism. When you teach someone to eat metabolically correctly, the volume of food they consume, and hence calorie consumption, tends to drop without much effort,' he says.

Clients also fill out a daily food log for the duration of their contract, and fax or e-mail it to Oz. For an extra fee, some stars have hotline access so they can get him 24 hours a day, seven days a week. 'There are clients who want extra attention,' Oz reveals. 'Veronica Webb was once PMS-ing just before a major New York fashion show, so she gave me a call. Her hormones were out of whack, so I told her what to eat to stop the bloating and balance her mood swings.'

LOW-CARB KING

Oz is a firm believer in the low-carb diets that stars like Jennifer Aniston have made so popular. He says many of his clients' problems derive from consuming too many carbohydrates, and it's one of the first things he moderates. 'I don't put them on low-carb diets, but carb-, protein- and fat-accurate diets. Translated, this means reducing the consumption of bread, pasta, cakes and cereal, all heavy, wheat-based products which

Garcia believes are damaging – particularly for women. 'Oestrogen works with carbohydrates to store fat which leads to exhaustion, heart disease and gives you that doughy look,' he says. 'When you move to less provocative carbohydrates – like rice or pumpkin, rather than white flour – the digestive system starts to function better.'

The other constant in the diets Oz prescribes is a supplement of a substance called NADH, a form of vitamin B3 (available in the UK from Holland & Barratt, £19.99 for 30, or visit the website at www.nadh.com). Most of his clients are taking it, and the excitement in his voice is tangible. 'It's a remarkable supplement,' Oz exclaims. 'It's a powerful re-builder of energy pathways, so you feel great. It also helps regulate cravings and weight. It was one of the first things I put Veronica on and she felt amazing.'

Oz tries to take one day off a week, but it's not always possible. When your schedule's packed with celebrities needing urgent nutritional advice, sometimes something's just got to give. This time it's the interview, which needs to be cut short – an unnameable 'A-list' client requires attention... ■

OZ'S CELEBRITY DIET

'The typical daily menu below is one way of lessening the starch and carbohydrate in your diet and increasing the volume of lean protein, such as fish, poultry, eggs and cheese, and the volume of raw and cooked vegetables. If you must have starch, stick to rice, corn and boiled potatoes. If you have a sweet tooth, eat berries, such as blueberries, blackberries and strawberries.' Follow for up to two weeks.

TYPICAL DAILY MENU

Breakfast 3-egg omelette, served with vegetables and perhaps cottage or feta cheese; ½ cup of berries
Lunch Salad Niçoise: 4-6oz tuna, 1 hard-boiled egg, sliced small potato, sliced tomato, olives, large serving of mixed greens, olive oil and vinegar dressing
Dinner Chicken breast; 1½ cups of vegetables, such as

asparagus, broccoli or string beans, ½ cup rice

WINONA'S ENERGY SHAKE

'This is such a simple recipe, yet it can make a huge difference to energy levels. Just mix all the ingredients together,' says Oz
 ● 16oz soya milk
 ● 2-3oz blueberries, strawberries and raspberries
 ● 1 small pot of natural yoghurt

VERONICA'S PMS REMEDY

'This is a great cocktail for regulating PMS,' Oz says 'If you take it before you're due, it will help ease blood sugar swings, cravings, mood swings and water retention'
 ● 100mg of P5P – a form of B6 (available by mail order from BioCare, call 0121 433 3727 for details)
 ● 50mg of magnesium
 ● 500mg of dandelion leaf