



Slim Pickings

The skinny on how the fashion crowd stays that way.

PHOTO BY RICHARD PIERCE

Recently, over yellowtail sashimi at Nobu, I watched with fascination as my dinner companion, a high-profile fashion insider, elegantly tapped a packet of rose-colored powder into her glass of Fiji water. "It's an L.A. secret," she whispered between sips. "Two packets of Emergen-C a day gets rid of the five-pound bloat."

I tried it, of course, and after two weeks, the five-pound bloat was still firmly in place. But that doesn't mean I won't test out the next obviously harebrained weight-loss scheme that a newly svelte friend mentions over dinner.

Discovering a true diet shortcut is akin to landing in Shangri-la. A metamorphosis from Tuesday to Friday beats a shopping spree at Louis Vuitton any day, especially in fashionland, where thin is the currency that is traded. When someone swaps her size 42 Chloé jeans for a size 36, people start to talk—generally in an insidious hiss. ("I hear she took diet pills" or "I'm sure it was liposuction.") At the same time everyone is wondering, "What's her secret?" And, "Who's her doctor?"

As the trends on the runways change, so do the diet crazes. The fashion flock has eschewed carbs, banned fats and even traded in solids for hot water with lemon, pressed vegetable juices and protein shakes. But in the back of every woman's mind there exists the hope that, someday, something effortless and instantaneous will come along, something capable of turning the average woman into a Nicole Kidman by Saturday night. To hear diet professionals—and those who seem to diet professionally—tell it, there's no shortage of tricks currently being tried.

Celebrity nutritionist **Oz Garcia**, for instance, raves about a compressed seaweed pill called CM3. Made in Germany, it's become extremely popular on the Continent. "It expands in your stomach like a sponge and blocks your appetite," explains **Garcia**. "I'm surprised that it hasn't gotten to these shores yet. But it's unbelievably safe, healthy and effective."

Nicholas Perricone M.D., author of *The Perricone Promise*, is known for his all-salmon, all-the-time diet. Perricone says that people who follow it religiously, eating the fish twice a day, can lose about six pounds in just three days. But if you're not a salmon fan, the doctor has another quick, fail-safe diet trick in his repertoire. "If you just stop coffee, drink green tea and stay on your current [diet] road, doing nothing differently, you'll lose 10 pounds," promises Perricone. "It always works."

A-list gym owner David Kirsch has certainly seen his share of strange, quick-fix

diets. He says the craziest one he's heard of is the goat's milk diet—only goat's milk. He too offers up a two-week body transformation regimen in his new book *The Ultimate New York Body Plan*, but who wants to count calories and exercise diligently when one can just while away the hours on a chaise, sipping goat's milk?

Meanwhile, Dee Grasso, a registered dietitian, caught wind of people at her gym talking about the "Five-a-Day Diet." "I was so excited because I thought they were talking about five fruits and vegetables per day," says Grasso with a rueful chuckle. "But no, it was five of whatever they want a day. So if they want Snickers, they can have five a day—but that's it."

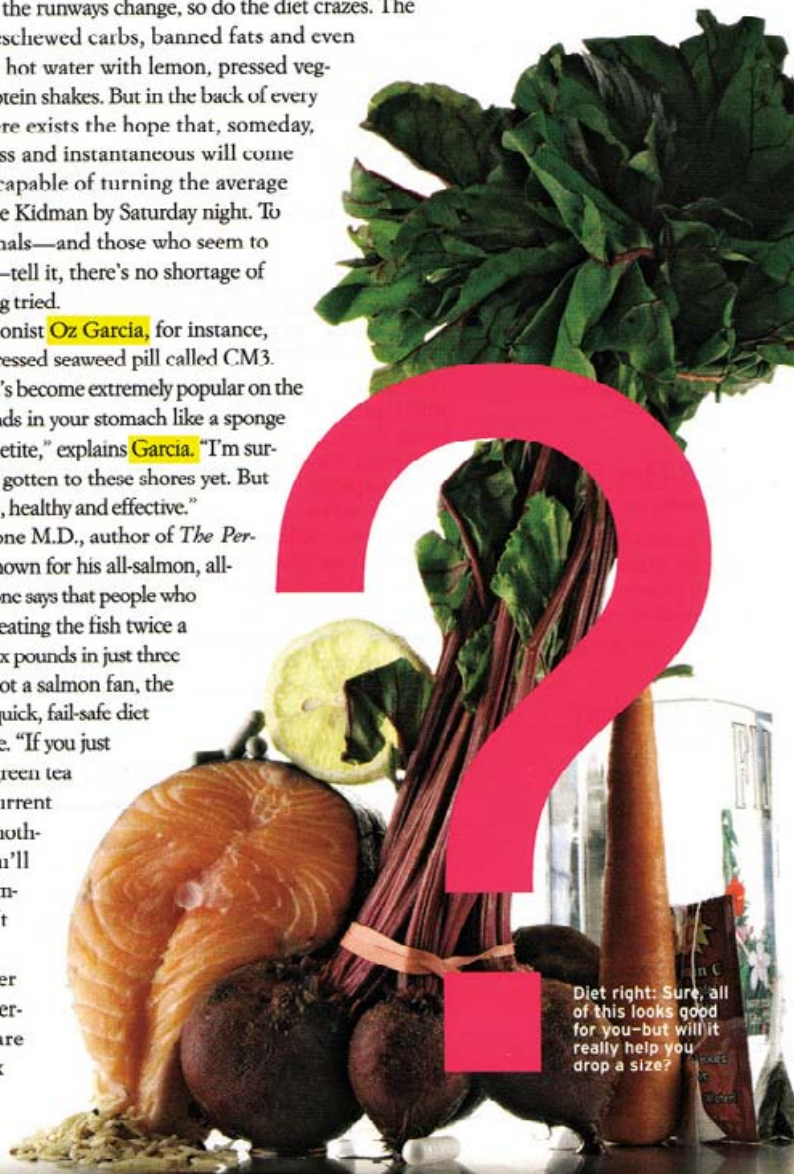
Of course, the ultimate trick is figuring out how to make a new diet manifesto mesh with your lifestyle. Being a regular at a restaurant seems to help. "When I walk into Cipriani, they just give me the grilled salmon and steamed spinach because I don't even want to be tempted by the pasta selections on the menu," says Muffie Potter Aston, a highly disciplined eater and exerciser. Aston

also cops to drinking glasses of skim milk on ice before black-tie events to help her pass up the passed hors d'oeuvres.

But quick fixes, as any dieter worth her celery sticks will tell you, can backfire. Designer Alice Roi recently dropped a significant amount of weight after a lifetime of yo-yo dieting. Her secret? Getting out of what she terms "the wicked diet mind-set." Says she: "I was always starving and then bingeing and then starving and then bingeing. It obviously wasn't working." After stopping that unhealthy cycle and eating balanced meals instead, Roi came out 30 pounds thinner.

Still, some old diet habits die hard. Barneys New York creative director Simon Doonan is fastidious about his mostly macrobiotic diet, in part because of his diminutive stature. ("When you're my height, the last thing you want to do is get tubby because you look squat," he says.) But despite his allegiance to oatmeal, brown rice, seaweed, greens and tea, he takes delight in recounting Andy Warhol's favorite diet trick. "He used to spit out his Teuscher chocolates," says Doonan. "He would just regurgitate them into a Kleenex. And, you know, he stayed remarkably thin for most of his life."

—ANAMARIA WILSON



Diet right: Sure, all of this looks good for you—but will it really help you drop a size?