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NUTRITIONIST TO THE STARS, MIAMI'S DR. OZ GARCIA SIGNS ON WITH THE JAMES ROYAL PALM, WHERE A VISIT MAY WELL EXTEND YOUR LIFE.

BY SUZY BUCKLEY WOODWARD

In a city obsessed with staying young, thin, and healthy, it's no wonder the latest boutique hotel on the block would take great pains to find creative ways to set itself apart. The James Royal Palm opened late last year with plenty of bells and whistles, including Miami-born Dr. Oz Garcia as the on-site spa's boldfaced lead nutrition consultant. Over the past 30 years, Garcia has built his career as an internationally renowned antiaging expert, authoring four books (*The Balance, Look and Feel Fabulous Forever, Redesigning 50: The No-Plastic-Surgery Guide to 21st Century Age Defiance*, and *The Food Cure for Kids*), coaching celebrities from Hilary Swank to Naomi Campbell, and creating an eponymous line of wellness supplements. Today, guests of the spa can enjoy the ultimate luxury: a customized wellness program they don't even have to think about. Garcia conducts a comprehensive hormonal, metabolic, and physical exam, then lays out an easy-to-follow, step-by-step program (including IV therapy, diet, and exercise) tailored to individual health and fitness goals.

What is it about people who live in or visit Miami that makes them candidates for your programs at The James Royal Palm's spa?

It's not that people need them, and it's not something unique to the area. Miami is a year-round destination that attracts all kinds of people. We advise guests to take advantage of certain programs because they make a difference in terms of quality of life—your energy, your mood, your appearance, your immunity, your brain function, your digestive system. They all might even roll over into how long you live.

Through your work here, what do you believe Miamians' main wellness goals to be?

Weight loss is universal. Everybody wants the Tracy Anderson body. I think there isn't one person in Miami, New York, Los Angeles, or Chicago who doesn't want to lose weight. There are areas where it's more acute in terms of a desire, if you want to be on the beach and look terrific, or if you're in entertainment or media, or if you're a model. And, of course, you have many people in those industries who vacation here or live here.

In Miami, we have seen a huge influx of juice bars and juice cleansing programs recently, and raw food continues to be a big trend here. How important are these to one's overall health?

Many of the decisions that people make and how we feel pivot off the health of the colon itself, so the quality of food that we eat makes a difference. It affects

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Miami's own antiaging expert Dr. Oz Garcia.



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Healthy fruits are available to guests of The James Royal Palm right on the sand, with the rental of beach chairs and an umbrella.



Garcia has coached celebs like Naomi Campbell and Hilary Swank.

“The quality of food that we eat makes a difference. It affects our emotional life and our immunity.”—DR. OZ GARCIA

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our emotional life and our immunity. That’s why probiotics—foods with live cultures of microorganisms that aid digestion—are so important. When you introduce them into your body on a regular basis, your bowel works a lot better, and, consequently, so do your immune system and your brain.

What do your vitamin IV drip therapies accomplish that regular vitamins (in pill or drink form) or foods do not?

IV drips [priced from \$300 to \$500] are offered as part of our ongoing wellness programs at The James. They last about 15 minutes and take effect within 30 minutes, leaving you feeling rejuvenated. They provide quick delivery of nutrients: Whereas a multivitamin must first go through the digestive tract, IV therapy does not. And you can receive much more vitamins and nutrients through an IV than

what you would get from a multivitamin. They also work especially well for someone with a compromised digestive system; oral intake of such high doses is simply not possible due to some people’s absorption limitations.

Miami is a party town where everyone is always looking for a hang-over cure. Tell us about the kinds of things you’ve discovered that can help combat the effects of a late night out.

We’ve developed different products (Oz Brain Enhancement Sticks) that are really good at neutralizing hangovers. I recognized that there were nutrients that could stop the really bad feeling, the metabolic breakdown of alcohol in your body, and then would kind of lift you above it. You wouldn’t have the nausea, the headaches that most people have when they drink how they do.

What’s in it?

It’s a combination of nutrients, some very technical. One is a form of carnitine called acetyl-L-carnitine. When added to guarana—a form of caffeine—it works extraordinarily well in clearing your head. And then you can stack on top of that a vitamin-B-like nutrient called DMAE, which is used primarily to increase focus, memory, intelligence, vigilance, and so on.

You’re a nutritionist. Where do you like to eat in Miami?

I love Yuca on Lincoln Road, which—unlike the Cuban food I grew up on—is more nouveau and healthier. I love Pascal’s on Ponce in Coral Gables and the great Portuguese restaurant Old Lisbon. I also really love Casa Tua.

Are there any foods you avoid on menus?

I don’t eat much meat or gluten. I’ll have seafood, vegetables, or risotto. I think most people are sensitive to gluten in some way and don’t know the damage that this does to our hormones. And as you get older, wheat tends to alter the shape of your body. Think of all the men with big bellies and double chins. Wheat and gluten affect hormones—specifically estrogen. It becomes an estrogen mimicker, tending to feminize the male body. You’ll see guys who are very soft and kind of carby-looking because of the amount of wheat they eat. And wheat will suppress the amount of testosterone in their bodies. So even if they’re eating well and working out, they can’t get control over their bodies. If you want to manage your weight, you should consider being on a wheat-reduced diet.

And sugar, too.

Sugar is horrific. *60 Minutes* has done two different shows in fewer than six months on the damage sugar causes the body. And *The New York Times* wrote a cover article on the relationship between sugar consumption and cancer. It was a nine-page story on how this stuff can kill you. Sugar is an actual toxin; it’s a poison. When you eat sugar, it melts very easily and quickly. If you put some oil in a pan and add a bit of sugar and turn the heat up, what happens? It starts to bubble and caramelize. And that’s what it does in our bodies. We’re kind of cooking along at 98.6 degrees, and sugar melts even below that temperature. Sugar caramelizes within the body and melts right against your arteries, your heart, your liver, and so on. It speeds up and ages your body tremendously.

So no Cuban coffee for you?

I became addicted to coffee over the years and quit when I was about 24. It’s not the fact that I don’t like coffee—I love it! I just don’t like how I feel when I drink it anymore, so I avoid it completely. Just a bit of Cuban coffee around Christmas.

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