



Diet your way to a great bikini bottom

NO matter how butt-kicking your workout routine is, you can't ignore the importance of a healthy diet when it comes to slimming down.

We went to celebrity nutritionist Oz Garcia, author of "The Balance: Your Personal Prescription for Super Metabolism, Renewed Vitality, Maximum Health, Instant Rejuvenation," (Regan Books/HarperCollins, \$13) who gave us his recommendations for a sane, simple, super-effective weight loss plan.

FOODS TO AVOID

■ Stay away from the wheat-based flour and white flour products such as pizza, bagels, crackers, and cookies, which can leave you feeling big and bloated.

Most crackers, cookies and other baked goods, as well as fried foods, contain trans fatty acids, which raise bad (LDL) cholesterol and increase risk of cardiovascular disease, while adding to your caloric intake.

Instead stick with grains such as corn, rice (such as brown, basmati, and jasmine-not white rice), and oatmeal.

■ Eliminate potatoes. Instead, have fiber-rich squash, yams, or beans and legumes such as chickpeas, navy beans, and kidney beans.

■ Stay away from high-fat cheeses. Instead eat low-fat dairy such as feta, goat, and

mozzarella cheese, as well as low-fat yogurt.

■ Put down that salt shaker. A high intake of salt will cause your body to retain fluids and leave you bloated and miserable.

Watch out for less obvious sources of sodium found in canned soups, chips, deli meats, and microwavable meals.

■ Avoid artificial sweeteners. Guzzling diet drinks that contain artificial sweeteners can backfire.

"These sweeteners actually increase cravings for other sweets," says Garcia.

FOODS TO EAT

■ Load up on those veggies. Vegetables, such as spinach, eggplant, asparagus, carrots, zucchinis, peppers, and broccoli are rich in fiber.

"Fiber helps make you feel

more full, therefore reducing cravings," explains Garcia. Mix things up by eating veggies raw, steamed, stir fried, broiled and baked.

■ Eat lots of protein. Go for lean proteins such as turkey, chicken, fish, tofu and organic eggs.

■ Eat plenty of fruit as snacks and desserts. Fruit such as blueberries, strawberries, grapefruit, papaya, plums and cantaloupe are rich in disease-fighting antioxidants and can help calm a sweet craving.

■ Don't forget to snack. Have at least one or two daily to keep your energy up and prevent over-eating.

■ Guzzle water. Staying well hydrated by drinking up to two liters of water each day can reduce cravings and make you feel fuller at meals, according to Garcia.

SAMPLE MEAL PLAN

Breakfast

A piece of fruit and an egg white omelet with steamed vegetables, OR half a grapefruit and a bowl of a multi-grain cereal with skim milk

Lunch

A can of tuna (in water, not oil), sliced tomato, and low-fat mayonnaise, OR a turkey burger (no bun) with salad and low-fat dressing.

Snack

Low-fat yogurt, string cheese, a small handful of nuts, or a piece of fruit.

Dinner

Broiled fish with steamed vegetables and a small portion of brown rice, OR assorted sushi or sashimi.

Indulgent late night snack

Nibble on some semi-sweet dark chocolate.

— Rachel Grumman

