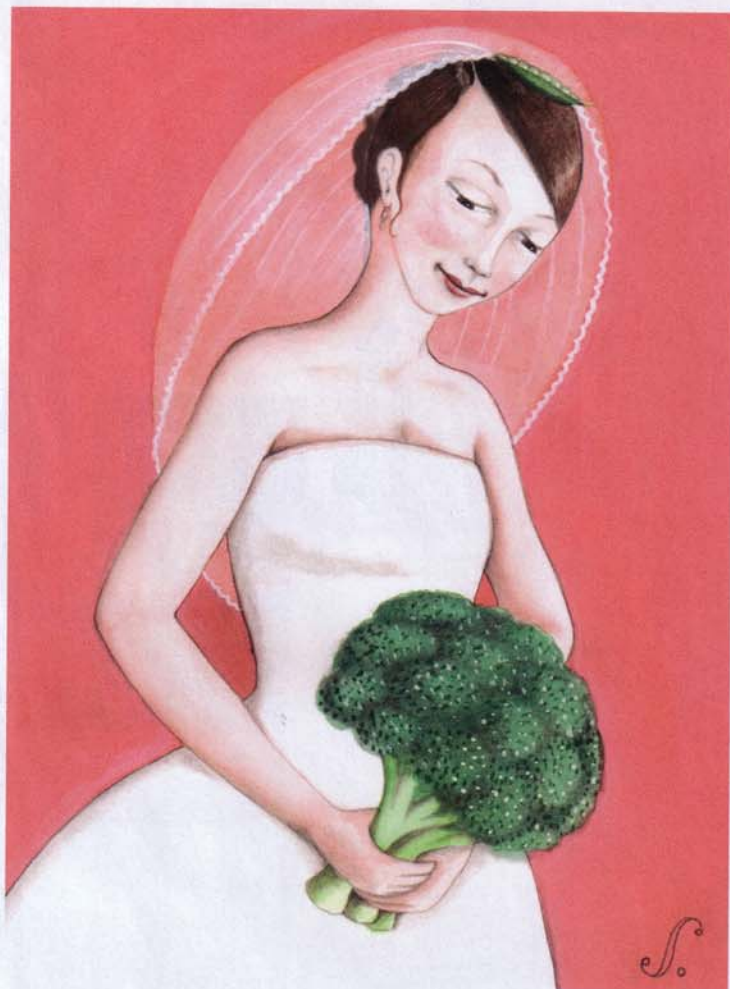


## Losing Propositions

A healthy approach to shedding those last few prenuptial pounds. BY CARA KAGAN



“THIRTY DAYS TO GO.” These four words strike terror in the hearts of some prospective brides. “I’ve frequently seen women extremely anxious about losing weight before their wedding,” says New York nutrition guru **Oz Garcia**. “Brides who pursue drastic weight loss at any price traditionally end up walking down the aisle looking haggard and lacking in vitality.” He adds that many crash-diet plans—from the Cabbage Soup Diet to liquid regimens to outright starvation—can cause digestive problems, dehydration and skin eruptions.

Every bride wants to look her very best on her wedding day, so it’s no wonder that many women turn to unhealthy,

even brutal diet and exercise programs in the month leading up to the big day. Those tactics are best avoided in favor of more judicious approaches to dropping what is a sensible amount of weight in such a short time.

But enough with the bad news; there *is* a way to lose those pounds, though it isn’t nearly as sexy. Forget the gimmicks and quick fixes. The secret is eating everything you’ve always known was good for you: a diet rich in fruits and vegetables with moderate amounts of such low-fat protein as chicken breast, egg white and fish at each meal. And portion control is key too. “I tell my clients to cut back by 20 percent on everything they would normally have, except for fruits and vegetables,” says registered dietitian Bonnie Jortberg, an instructor at the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center. “A month of Champagne toasts can also hinder weight loss. Alcohol adds calories that provide no nutritional value. It also loosens inhibitions and causes many people to eat more than they would normally.”

Exercise, of course, is part of any surefire plan, but “some women have these crazy ideas about working out several times every day to reach unrealistic goals,” says certified personal trainer Cindy Sherwin, a registered dietitian and the director of education at New York’s the Gym. “It’s not uncommon for a bride to get sick on her honeymoon because she has run her immune system into the ground,” adds Suzanne Meth, manager of E, a VIP workout studio at Equinox Fitness Club in New York. She suggests forty-five minutes of cardiovascular activity, followed by a half hour of strength training, five days a week. Other experts recommend combining that with getting eight hours of sleep a night and drinking lots of water for a totally safe and effective weight-loss plan.

Above all, you have to be realistic about what you can accomplish in a month. A reasonable and healthy goal is roughly one pound to a pound and a half a week. Those four to six pounds will make a difference, and shedding that amount in that time won’t cause you to deplete your energy or lose the glow in your skin, the brightness in your eyes and the shine in your hair.

Losing weight during this last stretch before your wedding should not be only about deprivation. **Garcia** recommends that you take time to treat yourself to a weekly massage. “It’s a fantastic stress reliever, and it just makes you feel good.” Now, how can you beat that? ❖

ILLUSTRATION BY SOPHIE BLACKALL