

MY CHALLENGE

# ACID TEST

*Intrigued by its healthful claims and Hollywood fans, Emilie Dingfeld cleared out her pantry and committed to the popular “alkaline diet” for one (very long) month.*

I CUT THROUGH a piece of beef tenderloin and its jus oozes onto the plate. The cambozola crumbled ovetop melts into the red-wine cream sauce that enrobes the meat. I sip pinot noir and eat as slowly as possible to prolong the experience, because next week I'll be eliminating meat, dairy, alcohol, caffeine and other sources of pleasure as I embark upon a 30-day alkaline diet. I feel like I might be making a big mistake.

The increasingly popular alkaline diet is predicated on paying mind to the pH of foods, the scale for which ranges from roughly six to eight, with eight being the most alkaline. The typical Western diet is rife with acidic foods like breads and coffee, and low on mineral-rich alkaline foods like vegetables and fruits. Advocates say that along with what we eat, chronic stress and intense exercise are acid-forming activities, releasing hormones like cortisol and creating oxidative stress in the body. Too much acidity, they say, can put strain on the body.

“The body has to balance out what we put into it,” says Lisa Kilgour, my guru for this challenge and a registered holistic nutritionist in the Okanagan Valley. “After years and decades of too many acidic inputs and not enough alkaline ones, we become deficient in these balancing minerals.” (There are dietitians and doctors who counter that regardless of diet, our bodies take care of our pH, provided our kidneys, liver and lungs are functioning properly.)

When I think of my food highs and lows, this resonates with me. Many of my daily activities have gastronomic partners in crime, →



Alkaline foods include leafy vegetables, such as radicchio and kale, and surprising ones like apple cider vinegar, tomatoes, lemons and limes.

## THE FACE OF THE NEW SOMETHING SWEET FRAGRANCE



Lise Watier Cosmétiques is proud to announce in collaboration with Shoppers Drug Mart that Jessica Kruger of Coquitlam, B.C. is the face of the new Something Sweet fragrance. This effervescent young woman dazzled the panel of judges with her infectious enthusiasm, unfailing positive energy, determination, and eloquence. Jessica clearly represents the Lise Watier brand values. She is definitely the Something Sweet we were looking for!



Thank you to the team at Shoppers Drug Mart Burnaby Northgate Village who were so kind to vote for me!

**"We are so thrilled that Jessica Kruger is the new face for Something Sweet. She's an amazing young woman that has overcome many challenges in her young life. She has such a positive outlook on life and is a wonderful role model. I was at the store the day she came in to take her photo and I just knew she was going to win. To me she is as cute as a cupcake! Thank you to Lise Watier for putting on this campaign, we were all so excited to participate in this fun event and even more excited to know that Jessica came to our store to take her photo. Congratulations Jessica!"**

Sincerely,

Tina Brusilo  
Cosmetic Manager  
Shoppers Drug Mart  
Northgate Village

**LISE WATIER**  
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## g | MY CHALLENGE

whether it's chips with TV or chocolate at the end of a hard day. Don't get me wrong—I do eat as many vegetables and fruits as I can to counteract my vices. But is it enough? I've been battling acne, albeit intermittently, for 13 years and psoriasis for about six. Is my skin—the body's largest organ, one that is said to manifest inner turmoil—trying to tell me something?

To kick-start the program, I get juices delivered from Benourished, a company in Toronto that caters to cleanses with freshly pressed juices and raw foods. I'm inspired to guzzle the verdant liquids because founder Julie McClure tells me she cured herself of chronic migraines by incorporating more alkaline foods. The concoctions give me a kick akin to a caffeine buzz and I start to crave morning juice instead of coffee. (Seriously!) But, as Kilgour forewarned, I have the hardest time on days four and five, never feeling full and craving all things forbidden. I experience headaches and itchy skin—but no feelings of elation or compliments about a glowing aura—so I contemplate quitting after two weeks. Because I'm feeling so sluggish and must eat so much food to get sufficient calories, Kilgour gives me the OK to incorporate organic sources of fish and chicken.

It takes a while for your body to trust that you're going to keep putting good things into it, explains Danielle Denichaud, a holistic nutritional consultant at Aekius, an educational centre for posture, physical conditioning and holistic nutrition in Montreal. "Once it's convinced, it starts cleaning the house. Think of it like a dirty house that looks good on the outside, but the closets are full of junk: It starts opening up the cupboards and taking out all the scraps... You get headaches, you feel cranky, your skin doesn't look so nice anymore..."

Maybe I feel bad because I did too much, too fast. "We're not saying eat completely alkaline, because to do so means that you're possibly missing out on essential nutrients in the bigger picture of things," says Vicki Edgson, co-author of *Eating the Alkaline Way: Recipes for a Well-Balanced, Honestly Healthy Lifestyle*, a book that gained prominence when Victoria Beckham tweeted about her love for it. (Jennifer Aniston and Gwyneth Paltrow are also reported to be fans of the diet.) "If 70 per cent of your intake is vegetable-based, alkaline-forming foods, then you can afford to have some of the more acid-producing foods because they're so essential to our overall well-being."

While I'm no mathematician, I'm trying to eat as many alkaline foods as I can for this 30-day experiment. Most of

my meals include a gluten-free carb such as quinoa, rice pasta or millet, heaps of grilled vegetables, a sprinkling of seeds like chia or hemp, and fats from oils and nut butters. I get the most bang for my buck in the morning with a green drink made with vegan protein powder and fruits and veggies, or Genuine Health Greens+ Superfood powder when I don't have fresh produce on hand. I snack on raw almonds and dried fruit throughout the day. Once my pantry is full and I figure out how to shop, meal planning isn't too difficult—although I spend about double what I normally would on a month's worth of groceries (\$400) because of the initial pantry stock-up and buying pricey organic vegetables. But I see baby steps of progress: By day 10, I don't crave coffee as badly; by day 13, I figure out how to cheat on chocolate by mixing coconut oil with cocoa powder, honey and shredded coconut, and my meat cravings wane; by day 15, I'm actually beginning to enjoy eating mountains of salad with tahini and apple cider vinaigrette. A date or two is enough to satisfy my sweet tooth.

In the fourth week, though, I realize I haven't noticed anything miraculous and not one person has noted that I look happier or healthier, though my mom claims my skin looks better—a remark that makes me feel triumphant. I start to loosen the reins, leaving room for a treat or two. I allow myself a glass of red wine at a birthday party and a goat's milk ice cream cone.

Then something happens: I go to France. No sooner do I land in Paris than I end up with flaky bits of almond croissant at the corners of my mouth. The reward centre of my brain lights up like the Eiffel Tower. For a week, my diet consists of baguettes, red wine, fromage, cream, duck, foie gras—and guess what? I don't go into anaphylactic shock, nor do I break out in hives. I feel little effect until a luxuriant meal that has three rounds of dessert, which leaves my intestines aching. I begin to crave gargantuan salads.

While I can't claim that my life changed in 30 days, I can say I developed an even stronger taste for vegetables and learned that I can live without coffee, meat and sugar. I now have control over my cravings (no more "I need a coffee" or "I'm dying for a burger"). My skin didn't clear like clouds after a rainy day, but I'm more in tune with my body, recognizing when foods don't agree with me. I discovered gluten-, dairy- and refined-sugar-free cookies that excite me; and blended smoothies that tasted like milkshakes, made of almond milk, raw cocoa powder and bananas. Kale chips and baked chickpeas are welcome stand-ins for chips.

But there's a time and a place for creamy, sugary, fatty indulgences. And when that time comes, I will savour every bite. @