

SLIM-DOWN STRATEGIES

The truth about the newest diets

Looking for a different plan? What you must know about the latest books out there.

BY CHRISTINE PALUMBO, RD

• The Alternate-Day Diet

James B. Johnson, MD, with Donald Laub, MD (Putnam Adult, 2008; \$23)

In a nutshell: Based on studies by the National Institute on Aging, James Johnson, MD, recommends cutting calories to just 20 percent of normal (about 500 calories for a woman) every other day to activate your “skinny gene” (the sirtuin 1, or SIRT1, gene). On alternate days, you eat what you want.

The pound promise: A woman can lose about 7 pounds in a month, he says.

Steal this tip: Wait a few minutes before you indulge a

craving: Your hunger will go away if you can wait it out.

The bottom line: If you can only handle dieting a few days a week, are OK with feeling hungry, and aren't prone to bingeing or starving yourself, this plan might be worth a try—but check with your doc first. Steer clear if you have diabetes, anorexia, or bulimia, or if you're pregnant or nursing.

The Jungle Effect

Daphne Miller, MD (Collins, 2008; \$23)

In a nutshell: Pick a culture, eat its native diet, and you can lose weight and improve your health, according to

Daphne Miller, MD, an associate clinical professor of integrative medicine and nutrition at the University of California, San Francisco.

The pound promise: Varies. One of Miller's patients dropped 14 pounds in two months by switching to an Amazonian diet.

Steal this tip: For a low-cal snack, try jicama spiced with lime juice and chili powder.

The bottom line: This is a healthy whole-foods approach—with weight loss as a happy side effect.

The Hot Latin Diet

Manny Alvarez, MD, with Arlen Gargagliano (Celebra, 2008; \$24)

In a nutshell: Fox News' senior medical correspondent Manny Alvarez, MD, promises to give you the secret to a better body: a diet built on seven Latin “powerfoods”—tomatillos, garbanzo beans, avocado, garlic, cinnamon, chiles, and cilantro.

The pound promise: Alvarez claims dieters can lose 12 to 18 pounds in the first six weeks, due to the power-

foods' metabolism-boosting and toxin-flushing power.

Steal this tip: Replace a heavy sauce or dip with low-fat fresh mango salsa.

The bottom line: There's a lack of legit research to support most of the weight-loss claims. And you're unlikely to lose 3 pounds a week.

The South Beach Diet Supercharged

Arthur Agatston, MD, with Joseph Signorile, PhD (Rodale Books, 2008; \$26)

In a nutshell: This updated version of *The South Beach Diet* promises to rev up your metabolism. You get an ease-into-it workout along with recipes and meal plans.

The pound promise: You can lose 1 to 2 pounds a week in phase 2, Agatston says; dieters drop even more weight in phase 1, he adds.

Steal this tip: To boost metabolism, work out at higher intensities for short bursts.

The bottom line: After the strict first phase, a tasty food plan follows. And the workouts make *Supercharged* better than the original. ●



Photo: Martha Grace Gray