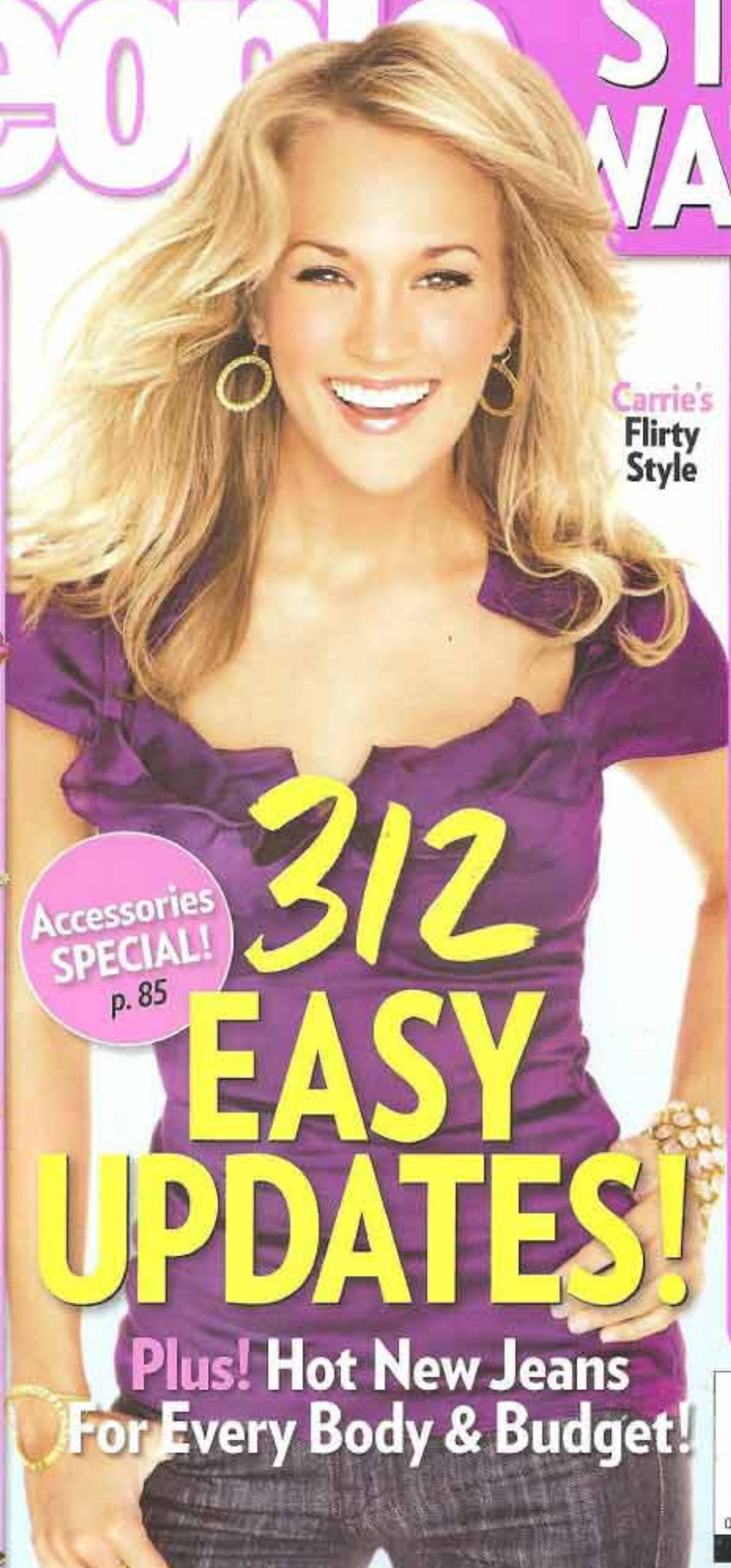


APRIL 2009

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6 Foods That LOWER STRESS!

Make these healthy bites major players in your diet and start feeling the calming effects



Eating-out tip

There are lots of ways to stick to a stress-reducing diet at restaurants. Order a healthy salad with potassium-filled tomatoes (like Lauren Conrad), and look for whole grains to incorporate into your meal.

1 OATMEAL

It's made of complex carbohydrates, which stimulate the production of the feel-good brain chemical serotonin, says nutritionist Jackie Keller.



2 MINT

"This is a digestive aid that calms your stomach down and quiets your body," says Keller. "The smell of mint also tends to be very soothing." Sprinkle some in hot chamomile tea for a double dose of relaxation.



3 DARK CHOCOLATE

"Chocolate can produce a positive emotional response because it's a comfort food for many people," Keller says. "Plus, it increases serotonin." But stick to a dark variety; it has less sugar than milk chocolate does.



4 KIDNEY BEANS

Packed with antioxidants, these beans fight the toxins in your body that can contribute to stress, says family practitioner Dr. Jeffrey Morrison. The balance of protein and carbohydrates also helps keep blood-sugar levels—and your mood—stable.



5 TOMATOES

Tomatoes are abundant in potassium, which helps to lower blood pressure and keep you calm, says Lisa Drayer, nutritionist and author of *The Beauty Diet*.



6 BANANAS

This fruit is also rich in potassium, and it gets high marks for its vitamin B6 content. "B6 raises levels of dopamine, another chemical in your brain related to feeling good," says Keller.



3 FOODS TO AVOID

CHILI PEPPERS

Spicy foods like chilis rev up metabolism and cause stress-induced responses, like sweating.



COOKIES

Sugar-laden treats like cookies spike insulin levels, triggering mood swings.



RED WINE

A glass a day is fine, but drinking too much can lead to lower blood sugar levels, causing heart palpitations.



Celeb Snack Secret

A balanced combo of carbs, protein and natural sugars keeps stress low and energy high. Stars like Angelina Jolie love Mighty Mom Mix—the perfect blend of dark chocolate, sun-dried cranberries, soy nuts and raisins.

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