



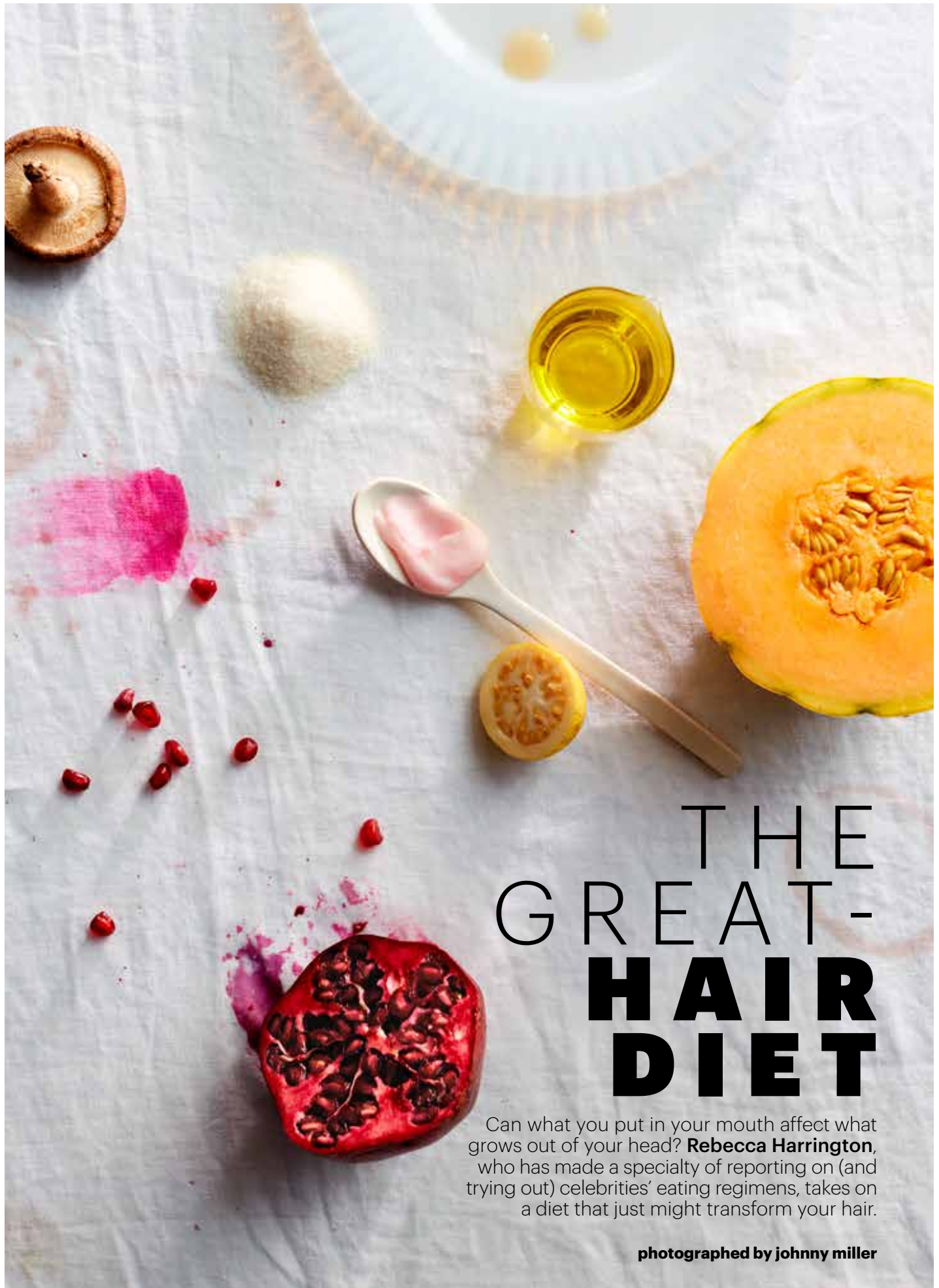
THE BEAUTY EXPERT

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FERNANDA LY
IS REDEFINING
BEAUTY

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THE GREAT-HAIR DIET
SKIN CARE...FOR YOUR HAIR?
25 BEST STYLING TIPS EVER



THE GREAT- HAIR DIET

Can what you put in your mouth affect what grows out of your head? **Rebecca Harrington**, who has made a specialty of reporting on (and trying out) celebrities' eating regimens, takes on a diet that just might transform your hair.

photographed by johnny miller

I have never thought my hair was a particular strength of mine. It's a mélange of several nondescript colors. It puffs out in the back in startling and unexpected lumps no matter how much I brush it. It has never grown longer than my shoulders, despite years and years of good-faith effort. And then I got pregnant.

For 40 weeks (OK, maybe just the last 20), my hair looked awesome. It was also the only thing that looked awesome on me, so I paid a fair bit of attention to it. It seemed like it had decided to be brown! It was very shiny! I was so pleased that I spent enormous amounts of energy attempting to blow-dry it with a round brush. I bought an expensive metal headband. And then I had the baby.

The baby was so great that at first I actually didn't notice that my hair had gone back to its old ways: dull, unshapely, extremely puffy. The difference was that now I had seen the promised land. I knew what truly great hair looked like, and I knew I could have it if I just used a round brush and was pregnant. Could I ever go back to my former glory without gestating a new human? According to doctors and the Internet, I could. I just had to eat very specific foods and forgo some aspects of eating-related joy.

This, according to science: "The most important thing for hair health, above all, is a balanced diet," says Patricia Farris, a dermatologist and clinical associate professor at Tulane University School of Medicine. She pins lustrous hair on a steady diet of "protein sources, like lean meats, beans, and Greek yogurt." High ORAC-value foods (that means foods that are very high in antioxidants) also aid the cause. This includes expected things, such as berries and dark chocolate, and unexpected things, such as oregano and cloves, which you can dump in and on anything.

Everything is fun and games and sprinkled with a light layer of sumac bran until the doctor tells you sugar must be avoided at all costs. "Sugar upregulates inflammation throughout the body. We now know that inflammation plays a huge role in hair loss," says Farris. Sugar also indirectly affects metabolism of hormones, which, we also now know, is a bad thing for hair.

Armed with this empowering information, I decided I would radically overhaul my diet in search of excellent hair. Maybe it wouldn't help. But it never hurts to try. And it sounded a lot better than many other diets I had tried in my life of doing diets as a job, which, by the way, is my job as a columnist at *New York* magazine. This one would be different, mostly because of all the oregano.



PREPARATION

As a new mom, I didn't really have time to spare sourcing meals that represented every color of the rainbow. I barely had time to shower—I certainly wasn't going to forage in a mushroom glen—so I decided to sign up for a meal-delivery service. One in particular, Sakara, delivers plant-based, high-protein, high-ORAC meals directly to your door. I would also make salmon as much as humanly possible for dinner, no matter how sick of it I got. And I would dump oregano on everything that wasn't particularly antioxidant friendly as a precautionary measure. Supermodels and other beautiful civilians take biotin supplements and report excellent hair as a result, but I was breastfeeding and cautious of pills. Instead, I would eat seeds and mushrooms I would forage from a glen called Whole Foods. I would also invest in styling lessons, for flourish. Soon my hair would resemble that of Gisele Bündchen, who has had two children and yet still boasts cartoonishly beautiful hair, probably because she eats only leaves and nuts. (I ate like Gisele and Tom Brady for four full days in 2016 and felt ravenously hungry, if marginally more like a human trophy, because of it.)

The Great-Hair Grocery List

Butter, milk, eggs, and Brazilian-supermodel-level luster: Nutritionist Lisa Drayer, the author of *The Beauty Diet*, shares her food staples, available everywhere kale is sold.

For silkiness:

Oysters, crabmeat, lean meats, tofu, and beans have loads of iron and zinc—minerals that are crucial for keeping hair smooth.

For unbreakability:

Broccoli, red peppers, brussels sprouts, kiwi, and oranges are rich in vitamin C, which can protect hair from breakage.

For strength:

Greek yogurt and peanut butter are high in protein, a main building block of great hair and a source of elasticity.

For a healthier scalp:

Fatty fish (like salmon and trout), walnuts, and flaxseeds are packed with omega-3 fats, which can prevent dry scalp and dandruff.

ORGANIC DELIVERY FOOD HAD BECOME MY RELIGION.

{ FIRST PERSON }



WEEK 1

Sakara meals come twice a week in a very nice black cooler bag that I wanted to save for a fun alfresco picnic, even though I have never gone on a picnic in my entire life. After I had accumulated three cooler bags, I started throwing them out. It is kind of against the ethos of the thing, but whatever. I know myself. I don't like eating outside.

For breakfast, you either had some kind of parfait of avocado mixed with seeds, or granola made out of seeds, or some very seed-based thing that resembled a muffin. Muffins would be studded with pumpkin seeds instead of sugar. Breads would be so laden with chia that they were actually very heavy when I cut into them. If a "bread" is actually a mixture of seeds, is it really a bread? This is a philosophical question that I would like you to consider for the remainder of this story.

In the end, however, chia seeds are extremely high ORAC-value foods, and muffins in general are not, so I dealt with it. After all, I only had approximately 30 seconds to eat

anything at all before the baby decided she needed a change of scenery, and I wasn't going to waste my critical faculty parsing how it tasted. (It tasted like seeds.) After a couple of muffins, I even started to prefer the seed-based baked goods. They were much less labor-intensive than putting milk into the prepackaged granola.

The lunches were usually salads or bowls full of vegetables with a dressing-like sauce on them. These were full of high-ORAC green leafy vegetables. Eating them also kind of kept me awake, although I can't really say why. Perhaps it was the bitter taste of all that uncooked spinach.

For dinners, I made salmon with a mustard glaze, salmon with four spices, and just regular old salmon. I ate chicken with lots of parsley on it—a high ORAC-value herb—and I had sides of sweet potato constantly (ORAC value: 2,115 per 100-gram serving, of which I ate thousands). By the end of the week, I was feeling pretty good, although I still hadn't brushed my hair and thus could not see whether my diet was making any visible difference.

PROP STYLIST: REBECCA BARTOSHEK

EXPERTS SAY IT TAKES MONTHS TO SEE RESULTS, BUT THEY ARE WRONG—MY DIET WAS IN ITS THIRD WEEK, AND MY HAIR WAS RESPLENDENT.

WEEK 2

My mother came to my apartment to visit the baby. I decided, although she had not asked me, to get even more prepared meals so that she too could live the Sakara life. Deranged with exhaustion, I was an evangelist by this point. Organic delivery food had become my religion.

“Mom! It’s so great. You will love it!” I said over the phone to her. My mother tentatively agreed to try a couple of meals.

She was not impressed. “Why does this muffin taste like seeds?” she kept asking me. “Get me a croissant.”

“This is a croissant made of seeds! It’s the same thing.”

It was no use—she had been defeated. We went to Shake Shack instead, but I doused my burger in ketchup, even though I hate ketchup, because it has a high ORAC value (578). As if by magic, she organically complimented my hair. (I had brushed it.)

WEEK 3

Experts say it takes two to three months to witness the aesthetic fruits of a high-ORAC diet, but they are all unequivocally wrong—my diet was in its third week, and my hair was resplendent. It was shinier than before, plus it had more body. My styling, however, was a mess. All I did was scrape it back into a tight ponytail. An onlooker could not even tell the glories of the high-ORAC diet. Salmon alone does not a great head of hair make. But how could I achieve an effortless daily hairdo that did not require a round brush, the proper use for which evades me? Would I ever bear a passing resemblance to Boston mom Gisele Bündchen?

I headed to Rescue Spa in Manhattan, a marbled palace featuring a fireplace that once belonged to Jackie O. I told the stylist I wanted a cool yet insouciant style that required no effort, and she told me how to get French-girl hair. I had never in my life been cool enough for French-girl hair. Still, I suppose, the mark of really beautiful hair is the ability to both embody *l’esprit français* and not look completely itinerant.

This is how you do French-girl hair, apparently: You constantly brush your hair whenever there is a break at any time, like when you are watching TV or preparing a burger made entirely out of red beets (ORAC value: 1,776). Then you are supposed to go into the shower and shampoo your hair but not put any conditioner in. Finally, you are supposed to not brush your hair, and let it air-dry with salt spray in it. This last part seemed particularly insane to me. How was I supposed to not brush my hair? What would it even look like? A cat’s back? A banana bread made only of seeds? I decided I couldn’t even think about it. I went home and ate a beet parfait out of stress.

WEEK 4

I returned to my hometown in Rhode Island for Easter, which is a tough festival for maintaining a high-ORAC, low-sugar diet. There is so much candy around and so few antioxidants. I put a lot of cloves on my ham, but did that really offset the many Peeps I was eating? I also decided to attempt French-girl hair here, in a more relaxed and less judgmental environment. I brushed my hair obsessively and then shampooed and liberally applied “beach sprays.” Then, critically, I didn’t brush it, although the temptation was strong.

As my hair dried, however, I realized: This diet works. My hair was so much silkier; I didn’t brush it, and I still didn’t look like the main character in *Nell*. I might keep myself on high-ORAC foods forever, just maybe not the random spices. I was planning to put oregano on my ham, and I chickened out. Beauty is already pain—it should not require an additional bitter aftertaste.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Hold the biotin—though it’s widely recognized as a hair-helping vitamin, it doesn’t have a lot of solid science backing its benefits (and doctors say biotin deficiency is pretty rare). What does have science behind it: Nutrafol, a supplement that contains saw palmetto to inhibit the male hormones known as androgens that can trigger hair loss in women and a ton of antioxidants to tamp down inflammation, which can also cause shedding.

In a six-month, double-blind, placebo-controlled study, 80 percent of women who took the supplement for six months reported an increase in hair growth (and 73 percent saw more volume). Multiple studies have shown that six months of marine collagen supplementation can increase hair growth and shine (find it in supplements like Crushed Tonic) by supporting follicle and scalp health, and a recent study suggests a patented prescription pill that combines low doses of spironolactone and minoxidil can help combat hair loss, too.