

dinner. The only resolution I had managed to actually keep was kicking my soda habit. But the caffeine withdrawal left me cranky, and normal annoyances, like a delayed train on the way to work, sent me into a blind rage. It was clear my generally good mood had been derailed.

I got in touch with Susan Kleiner, Ph.D., coauthor of *The Good Mood Diet*, to see if I could, in fact, eat my way to happiness. I liked that Kleiner's diet wasn't overly rigid—I could have a glass of red wine after week one and indulge in a bite-size piece of chocolate or a cup of sorbet every weekend to satisfy cravings.

■ The biggest dietary change I'd have to make was adding whey protein to my mid-morning snack. While her book suggests homemade smoothies, Kleiner recommends a yogurt substitute for people like me, who don't have time to make them. To one cup of plain nonfat yogurt I added a packet of Splenda and half a scoop of whey protein. I was initially put off by the whey—I associated it with bodybuilders, and although my goal wasn't losing weight, the last thing I wanted to do was put it on. "You're not going to bulk up," she assured me. "You're adding the equivalent of 2 ounces of chicken—it's the best way to get protein without extra fat." Protein, an amino acid high in tryptophan, helps elevate mood-boosting serotonin in the brain and would help me chill out under pressure.

After week one, I was feeling pretty good. I channeled my newfound optimism into finally ending my monthlong gym hiatus and eased back with a 30-minute run on the treadmill. Exercise, which releases feel-good endorphins, also promotes a perky mood.

Minor setbacks weren't erupting into full-on flare-ups, either. When my boyfriend showed up an hour late for our dinner date after "losing track of time" playing basketball, the old me would have sent angry "where the hell are you?" texts every five minutes. Instead of fuming, I dialed a friend whose call I hadn't returned in days—an unexpected upside to having a rare extra hour on my hands.

By the end of week two, I was still on my nothing-can-get-me-down high. And while I'll probably return to my tired (but easy) turkey sandwiches for lunch, I'm hooked on Kleiner's high-energy snacks, because the added protein keeps me from dipping into the office's crash-and-burn chocolate stash. I'm sure my fellow commuters will appreciate the blood-sugar upgrade.

Lisa Drayer's Top 10 Beauty Foods

- **Wild salmon:** A primo source of omega-3 fatty acids, which reduce skin inflammation, preventing redness, wrinkles, and sagging.
- **Low-fat yogurt:** One cup of the plain low-fat variety packs more skin- and bone-boosting calcium than a glass of skim milk.
- **Oysters:** A top source of zinc, which helps build collagen and speeds up skin renewal and repair.
- **Blueberries:** Full of antioxidants and anti-inflammatories that prevent long-term cell damage.
- **Kiwifruit:** Rich in potassium and vitamin C, which promote glowing, wrinkle-free skin.
- **Sweet potatoes:** Chock-full of beta-carotene, which helps smooth skin.
- **Spinach:** A great source of beta-carotene and lutein, which protects eyes.
- **Tomatoes:** Perhaps the only food best eaten processed. A major source of lycopene, the potent antioxidant is also thought to protect against sunburn.
- **Walnuts:** The omega-3s found in these nuts also help fight against skin ailments like psoriasis and eczema.
- **Dark chocolate:** Full of antioxidants and nutrients, cocoa (choose chocolate with at least 60 percent cocoa) helps boost hydration, smoothness, and protection against sun exposure.



Skin Deep

Chow down on antioxidant- and zinc-rich oysters, dark chocolate, and blueberries for a clear complexion.



Beauty Bites:

I want to prevent persistent breakouts By Yael Kohen, 29

Over a few short weeks last summer, my skin went from crystal clear to alarmingly blemished, a strip of deep, red zits sprouting up across the right side of my jawline. My doctor said a hormone imbalance was causing the flare-ups and prescribed a skin-friendly birth-control pill, which would take three months to work. But I was desperate for results, stat.

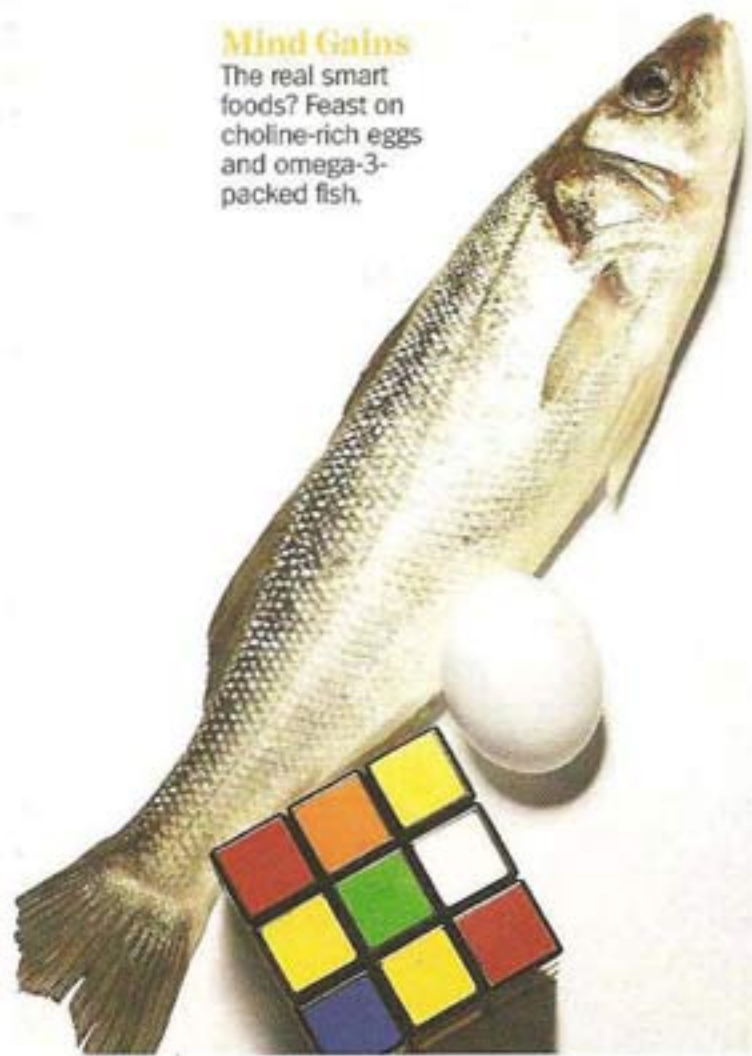
That's when I came across a new study citing acne reduction in people on the low-carb South Beach Diet. While I was already a pretty healthy eater, I'd noticed that my intake of splurgey treats—bagels, burgers, saucy Chinese food—had crept up in the past year. **Never a fan of strict plans, I called nutritionist Lisa Drayer, author of *The Beauty Diet*, to see if some tweaks to my current regimen could help clear my complexion.**

At my first session, Drayer mapped out her top 10 beauty foods (see sidebar), recommending I eat at least one per meal. She also set some ground rules: 1. Cut out refined carbs and limit sweets—they cause hormonal changes that lead to blemishes. 2. Add omega-3-rich foods like salmon and walnuts to reduce inflammation. 3. Up my intake of zinc-filled, skin-repairing foods such as crab, oysters, and dark-meat poultry. 4. Drink plenty of water and only one cup of moisture-leeching coffee a day. Alcohol, which amps up skin redness, is out for two weeks.

Minus the there-goes-my-social-life vibe, the diet seemed easy enough—brown-rice sushi didn't taste so different from the regular kind, and I should've nixed the 4 p.m. cupcake long ago. What suffered was my bank account: Salmon is one of the >>

Mind Gains

The real smart foods? Feast on choline-rich eggs and omega-3-packed fish.



pricier items at supermarkets, and blueberries—which I was to eat every morning for their antioxidant-rich, antiaging benefits (as if acne wasn't enough to worry about)—can cost about \$5 per pint.

Otherwise, on most nights at home, I could handle sautéing spinach with tomatoes or heating up Trader Joe's tasty Sweet Potato Bisque as a side to store-bought rotisserie chicken. For dessert, I'd pop a few squares of dark chocolate and eat an orange for the kick of collagen-boosting vitamin C. But it was the weekends that were the toughest. One Saturday night, after drinking several vodka sodas (I was at a party!), a case of the munchies had me chowing down on a burger at midnight loops).

Even so, after a few weeks on Drayer's plan, I noticed an improvement: The acne started to clear, and my skin felt miraculously smoother and more hydrated. It was motivation enough for me to add her healthy-eating principles to my daily diet—even if just part-time. As for the antiaging perks? I'll let you know in 10 years.



Food for Thought:

I want to sharpen my memory By Kara Jesella, 33

When did I first realize my memory wasn't what it used to be? I can't remember. But an inability to conjure, say, the last name of a guy I had a crush on in grade school went from merely annoying to downright alarming once I was accepted into a master's program.

Desperate, I turned to Frank Lawlis, Ph.D., coauthor of *The Brain Power Cookbook* I had long ago eighty-sixed most of the foods Lawlis thinks are, quite literally, mind-numbing: anything with preservatives, produce with pesticides, and processed foods. He approved of my diet staples—yogurt, salads—and liked that I usually ate protein at every meal and saved carbs for dinner. But he suggested I add more brain-boosters: raw fish for its omega-3 fatty acids, which improve intellectual performance; eggs for choline, which promotes clear thinking; lean red meat, which has iron that aids in concentration; and fruits and vegetables high in antioxidants and/or potassium, like berries, bananas, and carrots.

"What's the name of the place we stayed in Sardinia?" my boyfriend asked me a few days later as I ate a yogurt with

banana on top. I looked at him blankly. "Cagfiaril" He was triumphant; I was not.

But let's give the banana a break; it takes 20 to 30 minutes for the food you eat to affect your memory. And following Lawlis's diet long term builds up a better memory over time. To test for immediate results, I timed my meals to when I needed extra recall power. That Wednesday, for breakfast, I ate two soft-boiled eggs with cheese and drank a cup of coffee. As I read about Pop Art for my art history class, I couldn't tell if I was retaining more than usual, but I definitely felt satiated and focused. For lunch, I ate sushi with a leafy salad. Lawlis advocates exercising lightly and to a beat, so when I was done, I cranked up my iPod and walked to school. In class, other students appeared to be impressed with me as I pontificated about Andy Warhol; I certainly was impressed with myself.

Should I thank the organic blueberries? Lawlis notes that medicine works better for people who believe in its effectiveness. It's hard to say, then, whether it was my belief in the power of what I was eating or the actual food itself that made the difference. Either way, after two weeks on his plan, I felt really good; I'll definitely continue to emphasize the recommended foods in my diet, which almost any doctor would agree are healthy—whether your goal is photographic recall or not. Plus, Lawlis even allows wine and beer. Preferably not right before class. **mc**

SAVOR
the sweet taste
- OF -
VICTORY

MEAL 1: Red Berries Cereal

SNACK 1: Strawberry Cereal Bar

MEAL 2: Milk Chocolate Protein Shake

SNACK 2: Chocolate Peanut Protein Snack Bar

MEAL 3: Grilled Salmon

DESIGN YOUR VICTORY PLAN. GO TO YAHOO!® & SEARCH "SPECIAL K"

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FOOD STYLING: JAMIE KIMM AT BRUMI CONDON; PROP STYLING: MATTHEW GLEASON AT BERNSTEIN + ANDRULLO

» For more on these diets, go to marieclaire.com/diets.