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THE BEAUTY EXPERT

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Hair

Celebrity

SLIM

Vinegar shots. Cookie meals. Baby food. Many stars are embracing strange new diets—and it seems the crazier the better. By Brooke Le Poer Trench

A battle-weary young soldier in William Shakespeare's *Henry V* said he would give all his fame for a pot of ale—and many of today's celebrities and socialites can relate. After all, a big part of having it all—the wealth, the status—is going without. We've heard about actresses living on bland protein cookies for weeks at a time, locking Oreos in a safe to keep them out of reach, and even eating jars of baby food for dinner. "All women are familiar with the idea of limiting themselves to certain foods to lose weight," says Madelyn Fernstrom, a nutritional biochemist and director of

the University of Pittsburgh Weight Management Center. But the rich and famous, in particular, seem to believe a gimmick will be faster and more dramatic than the old moderation approach. "They want to be special," says Susan Bowerman, a dietitian and lecturer at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, California. Plus, "stars are often trendsetters, so when they hear about a new diet, they go for it," says Charles Figley, director of the Psychosocial Stress Research Program at Tulane University in New Orleans. Judging by the number of size 0s in Hollywood, these weird restrictions can work, though some may not be all that healthful. Top nutritionists separate the fat from the fiction.

THE BABY-FOOD DIET

Paparazzi often stalk the entrance to Kitson in Los Angeles, but perhaps they should try the baby aisle at the supermarket instead. Some A-list actresses have reportedly tucked into jars of baby food at mealtimes to lose weight. Bowerman admits that baby food could do the trick. "If it doesn't have added starch, it can be a good source of nutrition because it's just pureed vegetables, fruit, or meat," she says. Whether it's a habit worth emulating, however, is ques-

tionable. After all, there is something bleak about emptying a jar of Gerber Turkey Rice Dinner into a bowl as your meal for the evening. "This is certainly a creative way to control your intake and limit calories, but few people outside of nursery school are interested in eating a meal this tasteless and boring," says Stephen Gullo, a health psychologist and diet expert in New York City and the author of *The Thin Commandments* (Rodale). "It's needlessly draconian." Instead, if you want structure, Gullo suggests that you stick to the same lunch (try soup and a high-fiber cracker with

low-fat cheese) and dinner (go with fish and salad or green vegetables) for a week. "This serves the same purpose by taking away day-to-day decisions, but it tastes better and provides you with food you're less likely to tire of."

THE COOKIE DIET

One of the most popular diets in Los Angeles over the past few years revolves around four to seven protein-based cookies a day, which amounts to about 500 to 600 calories, with a meal of lean protein and vegetables adding another

300 calories, approximately. The first cookies on the scene were made by Dr. Siegal's Cookie Diet, followed by the Smart for Life Cookie Diet, the Hollywood Cookie Diet, the Cookie Congregation diet, and the Soypal Cookie Diet (which differs from the others in that it calls for the replacement of one meal a day with 150 calories' worth of cookies). Most look like Toll House cookies, and some come in chocolate chip and oatmeal raisin. (There's also a similar program with brownies, but the company, [BodyWell Nutrition](#), supplies supplement packs and a recipe for the brownies, which you bake yourself.) They all tend to have an energy bar–like flavor and a dense, chewy texture.

The cookies contain protein, amino acids, fiber, vitamins, and minerals, and the aim is to eat them "to suppress hunger and prevent an increase in blood sugar," says Sanford Siegal, the physi-

find it hard to trust themselves eating anything else once they've slimmed down on this program," says Bowerman—which is exactly what has happened to some. Karen*, a Los Angeles–based fashion editor, has a famous friend who lost 30 pounds by sticking to the plan. "Once she was slim, she didn't want to stop," Karen says. "The cookies are basically the only things she'll eat now out of fear of bulking up again."

THE APPLE-CIDER-VINEGAR DIET

A shot of something before eating sounds more like the fast track to rehab than to flat abs. But some celebrities swear by a premeal gulp of vinegar. The apple-cider-vinegar diet is enjoying a resurgence—decades after its original heyday in the '70s—thanks to proponents such as Fergie and Heidi Klum.

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cian who founded the original program. The idea is essentially the grazing philosophy. Nutrition experts say that the cookie diet is fine for a few days, "but nothing should permanently replace lean protein, fruit, and vegetables in your diet," Bowerman says.

The appeal of this plan is simple: Who doesn't like cookies? "Many women will have a more positive response to going on a diet that allows them to eat a treat food versus something like a protein bar—which is similar but doesn't sound as enticing," says Gullo. "And there is science to support the idea that eating small meals throughout the day stimulates your metabolism to work faster."

Unfortunately, eating normally again once you've lost weight can be tough. "Women who have been living on these cookies haven't necessarily learned how to eat regular foods healthfully and may

*This name has been changed.

(Klum says even a sniff curbs her cravings.) "This diet rests on the theory that vinegar cuts through fat in your body as it does grease in the kitchen, but that's an old wives' tale," Fernstrom explains. And Bowerman adds, "There is no biological reason why it would curb cravings, but vinegar can kill anyone's appetite simply because it's unappealing." Ultimately, the secret to any success on this diet is belief in it. "It becomes a behavioral device—you're reminding yourself that you're trying to lose weight," Bowerman says.

THE LUNCHBOX DIET

You may want to find a vintage Wonder Woman lunch box on eBay, because celebrities including Cameron Diaz and Keira Knightley have tried the Lunchbox Diet, created by British personal trainer Simon Lovell and detailed

in his book *The Lunchbox Diet* (Harper Collins UK). Adherents eat their normal breakfast and dinner, but instead of lunch, they snack all afternoon from a standard-size lunch box filled with 60 percent vegetables, 30 percent protein, and 10 percent fat (low-fat dressing, cheese, or peanut butter). "There's nothing magical about this diet, but it would work because it centers on grazing, which has been proven to foster weight loss," Fernstrom says. "Plus, included in the idea of the lunch-box gimmick is a natural portion-control factor—you're restricted to what can fit inside."

THE AIR DIET

If you can't imagine Cheez Doodles as a diet food, consider research from Penn State University showing that increasing the amount of air in food dramatically reduces how much of it people eat. The study involved injecting various quantities of air into bread, cereal, and cheese puffs. Using statistical models, the scientists found that if manufacturers added more air to their food, people would lose weight. Nutritionists say this research isn't just fluff. "The notion of increasing volume without adding anything is a good one," says Fernstrom. "People will think they're eating more than they actually are." In fact, there may be a link between perception of food and hunger. "If it looks like we're eating the same amount, we'll feel as full," Bowerman says. Just make sure your diet doesn't contain too much of the wrong kind of airy fare. "Leafy greens will always be more nutritious than puffy cheese snacks," she says.

THE RAW-FOOD DIET

The cult of raw food sprouted a few decades ago, but in recent years it has attracted a strong celebrity following, many of whom see it as the path to nutritional nirvana. Devotees believe that cooking food destroys its value—or "life force"—and so none of the fruits, vegetables, nuts, and grains they live on are heated above 116 degrees (meat and chicken are out). "The good news is that the diet encourages people to eat lots of unprocessed fruits and vegetables, which studies show are very beneficial," says