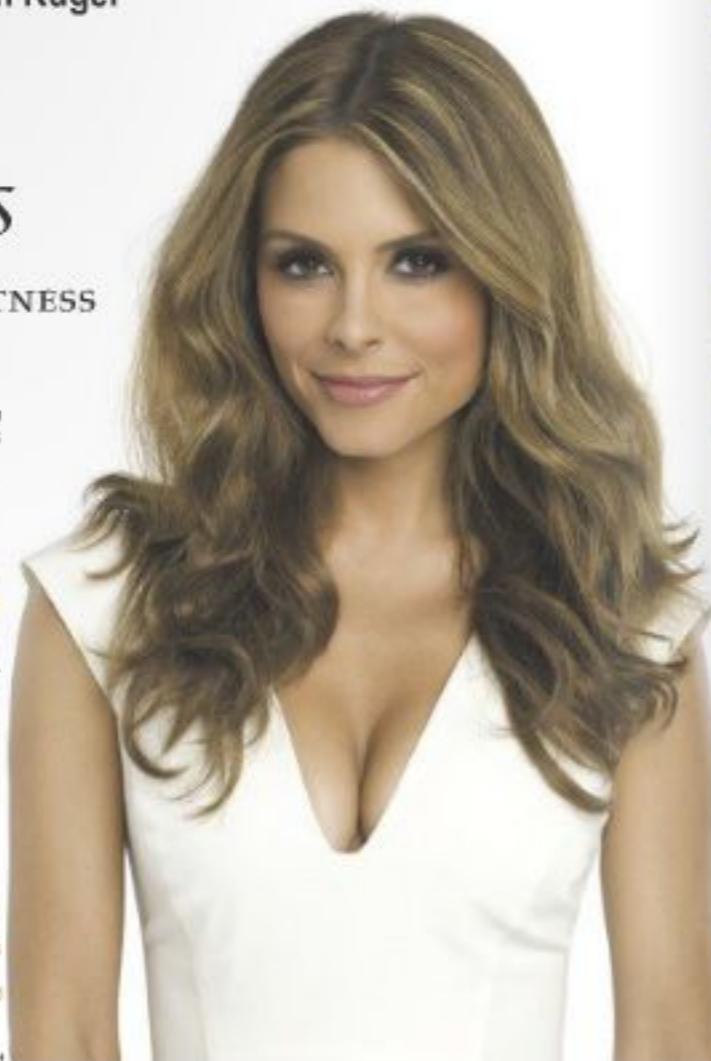




Celebrity Chic HOLLYWOOD

with Allison Kugel

María Menounos AND HER "EVERYGIRL" BRAND TAKE ON FITNESS



IT seems there are a plethora of celebrity lifestyle gurus on the scene from Gwyneth Paltrow and Jessica Alba to Alicia Silverstone... all sharing tips on everything from how to dress and accessorize, to how to stay healthy and feel good in our own skin. Of all the advice espoused by famous faces, however, Extra! Host, star and producer of Oxygen Network's Chasing Maria Menounos, and self-professed "EveryGirl," Maria Menounos seems to be everybody's darling.

Maria is a self-made Hollywood success story with blue collar, Boston-bred, Greek immigrant roots. She maintains close relationships with her family, and says she lives in a state of gratitude for all the blessings in her life. I can't think of a more solid source of healthy lifestyle advice than Maria whose newest self-help tome, *The EveryGirl's Guide To Diet And Fitness*, is no exception.

Maria tells me she works hard to maintain her gorgeous body through diligent diet and exercise. So naturally, *The EveryGirl's Guide To Diet And Fitness* is packed with practical and insightful weight loss and weight maintenance tips, healthy (and delicious) low-cal recipes, easy-to-follow workout routines straight from top experts, and interviews with fit and fabulous celebrity friends. Maria guides readers through the challenging, and sometimes discouraging, journey to achieving long-term fitness with baby steps anyone can follow and incorporate into their daily routine.

This was my second interview with Maria; our first was for the website PR.com, in 2011. During this one, she shared sources of personal inspiration, specifically how she stays on track with her fitness goals, and just as important... how and when she allows herself to indulge without guilt.

AK: In our interview for *The EveryGirl's Guide To Life*, you talked about your journey from slab to super-organized. With *The EveryGirl's Guide To Diet And Fitness*, you share your journey from an out-of-shape size 14 to a fit size 2. Celebs can be secretive about their "tricks." Why spill the beans on your coveted beauty and fitness routine?

MARIA: I am all about sharing information. It's one of the positive things about living in the information age. I also love helping people. I ended my last book, *The EveryGirl's*

Guide To Life by saying the true reason we are here on earth as human beings is to help one another, and my stance on that has not changed.

AK: Speaking of size 14 versus size what is your response to plus size women who shout from the rooftops that there is nothing wrong with being a size 14?

MARIA: There is nothing wrong with being a size 14. Size and weight doesn't matter as we all have different body types. What matters is health. If you're overweight, you could be at risk for Diabetes and a host of other health issues. We all want to live long lives, and we all want to be productive in our later years, too. The goal needs to be long-term health over anything else.

AK: I love how you advocate growing our own food, and give options on how to eat healthy regardless of someone's budget. Which foods do you prefer to grow yourself, and which don't you mind picking up at a local Whole Foods or Farmer's Market?

MARIA: I grow a variety of foods and I'm constantly changing them up. That's what makes it fun; but I'm never going to say, "Grow this over buying that."

AK: Strict rules take the fun out of it...

MARIA: Right! I'm just happy to hear that people are getting fresh produce into their diet. Gardens are wonderful, but I do realize that many women don't have the space or time to commit to growing and tending one. It is all about small changes here and there.

AK: Your super-toned abs have become something of a trademark for you. Aside from your active and healthy lifestyle, how have you achieved and maintained such incredible abdominal definition?

MARIA: Genetics play a part. My dad had amazing abs growing up, and he still does. I do lighten my stomach during the day as a form of exercise. And I'm not afraid to stick my feet under the couch and get in some crunches while I'm watching TV from time to time, either.

AK: My super downfall are sweets, namely chocolate. If it's chocolate and it's not nailed down, I'm eating it! If it weren't for my chocolate addiction I'd likely be a size 2/4 instead of a 4/6. My weakness seems to be a popular one for women. Any advice you can share?

MARIA: Drink hot water throughout the day (Maria opts for hot water in lieu of tea or coffee). It really is a deterrent. Try getting into organic chocolate. The texture is similar, and that may help.



AK: Portion control with sweets is another biggie! **MARIA:** Try eating 10-50% less of the chocolate portion in front of you. You can also say to yourself, "sugar is pain." A trainer told me this when she relayed all the health issues that arise from sugar consumption.

AK: During our last chat, you said to me, "I'm not really a traditional person." This is kind of a weird segue, but does that help you to resist indulging in traditional holiday foods or traditional customary eating? For example, are you ok with skipping birthday cake on your birthday, or not eating a big holiday feast with family?

MARIA: I'm not traditional when it comes to life path or career, but when it comes to holidays I'm all about tradition! I love birthday cake and I love Thanksgiving feasts. The thing is, those occasions literally happen once a year, and there is nothing wrong with that. When I know I am going to pig out over the holidays, I will work out in the morning before, or I'll be sure to try to eat cleaner leading up to those days, or afterwards.

AK: So deprivation is out...

MARIA: I don't believe in total deprivation, and I just don't have the willpower for it.

AK: Do you feel that the outdoor California lifestyle and warm weather has helped you keep off those 40 pounds you famously lost? And since most people who will read your book throughout the country do live through long cold winters, I'm sure they would love to hear how you would navigate that. It's hard

for people to stay motivated when they are hiding under bulky sweaters and winter coats for months.

MARIA: I lost the weight when I lived in Boston through the dead of winter. My book has all of the steps, and it is doable. I'll admit it's easier in warm weather to stay active and trim. But again, the book has solutions to get you through.

AK: I love, love, love that you don't just talk about diet and fitness in your book; you also include many recipes and workout demos for people to follow. I can see that many of your favorite recipes come from your tight-knit Greek family, in particular your mom. Who are some of your very favorite workout mentors and experts?

MARIA: My mom and I love Rachael Ray. We also love [personal trainer] Harley Pasternak and Jillian Michaels!

AK: Assuming that you become a mom sometime in the future, how will you deal with putting on extra weight during pregnancy should you see a number

on the scale that resembles your old pre-fitness/health weight? Any thoughts on how you will look upon the weight gain or adjust any emotional tie-ins to losing it. Pregnancy weight gain and loss, especially with celebrities seems to be in the headlines a lot these days?

MARIA: I can tell you my worry won't be about the weight. It will be about putting clean food into my body for the baby, more than anything. Obviously, I don't yet know exactly what that process entails, but you can bet I will when the day comes!

AK: In your book you talk about your strict rule of no eating after 7PM. You even have a post-it on your kitchen wall that reads, "If it's after 7, don't even think about it!" So, even if it's a cozy movie night? Even if you've had a really long, stressful day on set?

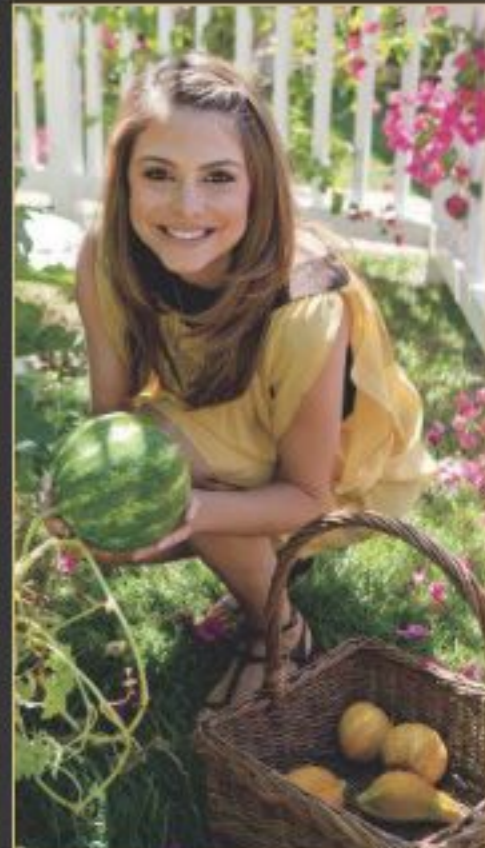
MARIA: Those rules are there as guidelines more than strict rules. Of course, I sometimes indulge after 7PM, probably on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Having the guideline helps to curb me. It keeps me on track.

AK: So, it's all about "indulging" being the exception, rather than the daily rule. I can live with that.

MARIA: In the book I talk about building a fence, but giving you a big yard to play in. And in that yard there is definitely room to snack during late night movies.

Maria Menounos' newest book, *The EveryGirl's Guide to Diet and Fitness*, is available at bookstores nationwide and on Amazon.com.

Visit RandomHouse.com for more information. Follow Maria on Twitter @mariamenounos



Allison Kugel is an acclaimed entertainment journalist with more than 150 widely read and syndicated newsmaker interviews to her credit. She is Vice President of Public Relations and Social Media Firm, Full Scale Media. Follow @FullScale_Media.