

Maria Menounos And Her “EveryGirl” Brand Take on Fitness

By Allison Kugel

Gwyneth Paltrow, Jessica Alba, Alicia Silverstone... it seems there are a plethora of celebrity lifestyle gurus on the scene 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, Extra! Host, star and producer of Oxygen Network's *Chasing Maria Menounos*, and self-professed “EveryGirl,” Maria Menounos is my favorite.

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

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 Menounos guides her readers through the challenging, and sometimes discouraging, journey to achieving long term fitness with baby steps that anyone can follow and incorporate into their daily routine.

During this, our second interview together (our first was for the website *PR.com*, in 2011), Maria shares her own sources of personal inspiration, how she stays on track with her fitness goals, and when she allows herself to indulge without guilt.

Allison Kugel: In looking at our past interview together in 2011, when you wrote ‘The EveryGirl's Guide To Life,’ you talked about your own journey from slob to super-organized. Same thing here with ‘The EveryGirl's Guide To Diet And Fitness.’ You share your own journey from an out-of-shape size 14 to a fit size 2. Many celebs are secretive about their “tricks.” What do you get out of spilling all of your own tips and tricks to your fans?

Maria Menounos: 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.

Allison Kugel: Speaking of size 14 versus size 2, what is your response to plus size women who shout from the rooftops that there's nothing wrong with being a size 14?

Maria Menounos: 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.



Allison Kugel: I love how you advocate growing your own food, and you don't just sing the praises of having a home garden, you give options on how to do it no matter what someone's budget, or what style of home they live in. Can you share which foods you prefer to grow yourself, and which items you don't pick up at a local Whole Foods or Farmer's Market?

Maria Menounos: 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.”

Allison Kugel: Strict rules take the fun out of it...

Maria Menounos: 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's all about small changes here and there.

Allison Kugel: Your super-toned abs have become something of a trademark of yours, and you love to show them. Aside from your active and healthy lifestyle, how have you achieved and maintained such incredible abdominal definition?

Maria Menounos: Genetics play a part. My dad had amazing abs growing up, and he still does. I do tighten 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.

Allison Kugel: My super downfall is sweets, namely chocolate. And I mean, if it's chocolate and it's not nailed down, I'm eating it! In fact, if it weren't for my chocolate addiction, I'd probably be a size 2/4 instead of a 4/6. Since my weakness is such a popular one, especially for women, what would your advice be to me?

Maria Menounos: Drink more hot water throughout the day (*Maria opts for hot water in lieu of tea or coffee*). It really is a deterrent. You can try getting into

organic chocolate. The texture is similar, and that may help.

Allison Kugel: Portion control with sweets is a biggie!

Maria Menounos: 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.

Allison Kugel: 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 Menounos: 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's nothing wrong with that. When I know I'm going to pig out over the holidays, I'll work out in the morning before, or I'll be sure to try to eat cleaner leading up to those days, or afterwards.

Allison Kugel: So deprivation is out...

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

Allison Kugel: 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're hiding under bulky sweaters and winter coats for months.

Maria Menounos: 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.

Allison Kugel: I love, love, love that you don't just talk about diet and fitness in your book; you include recipes and workout demos for people to follow. I can see that many of your favorite recipes are the result of your tightknit Greek family, particularly your mom. Who are some of your favorite workout mentors and experts?

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

Allison Kugel: Assuming you become a mom sometime in the near future, how will you handle putting on weight during your pregnancy? Should you end up seeing a number on the scale that resembles your old pre-fitness weight, how will you deal with that, both emotionally and practically?

Maria Menounos: I can tell you that it 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!

Allison Kugel: In your book you talk about your strict rule of no eating after 7 PM. 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 Menounos: Those rules are there as guidelines more than strict rules. Of course, I sometimes indulge after 7 PM, probably on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Having the guideline helps to curb me. It keeps me on track.

Allison Kugel: It's all about indulging being the exception, rather than the daily rule. I can live with that.

Maria Menounos: 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.

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

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