

Town & Country

ESTABLISHED IN 1846

There Will Never
Be Another

**GLORIA
VANDERBILT**

THE WOMEN
WHO RUN
THE ART WORLD

WHERE TO GO NEXT

YOGA CURES

AT HOME WITH
COSIMA VON BÜLOW

By William Norwich

Pass the Juice

Danielle Stein tries the new 800-calorie-a-day “alkaline cleanse.”

HERE WE ARE AGAIN at the starting line of a season from which we never manage to emerge unscathed. The holiday pattern is to spend six weeks overindulging and start atoning come January 1, but wouldn't it be preferable to start the new year still fitting into this year's trousers? Welcome to the post-Thanksgiving cleanse: a few days of diligence between the holidays that should make January feel less like one big hangover.

The Master Cleanse was invented in 1941, and now there are dozens of ready-made programs. But this year brings a new and notable one: the alkaline cleanse. According to Denise Mari, founder of New York's Organic Avenue—a company dedicated to raw and

organic living—having an acidic body pH, caused by eating too many acidic foods, is what's responsible not only for weight gain but for all sorts of severe illnesses. “The overacidification of blood and tissue is what leads to many of the diseases we see diagnosed today,” Mari says. As unlikely as this sounds, Mari isn't the only one to believe it; prominent New York physician William Howard Hay advocated an alkaline diet in his 1926 book *Health via Food*. And though the proof is scant, the implication—that by cutting out acidic foods like animal protein, coffee, soda, alcohol, and sugar, we can avoid things like cancer—is irresistible. Nearly as compelling is Mari's contention that alkaline foods (a limited list that includes mostly vegetables) make for the most effective cleanse. “Most programs focus on fruit juices, which are actually acidic,” she says. “But alkalizing the body is the future of cleansing.”

Organic Avenue is best known for gentle cleanses that include substantial treats like sunflower falafel and vegan chocolate mousse, but it also offers two five-day alkalizing cleanses, which are decidedly more intimidating. When I pick up my first day's worth of products at the company's Southampton, New York, branch, Fernanda Niven (the socialite and former Vera Wang publicist left fashion to become an investor in Organic Avenue last year) tells me that she admires me for choosing such an ambitious program. She has recently done one of the company's alkaline cleanses herself and explains that they are really only for those whose bodies are temples of clean living to begin with; even then the detoxing side effects (nausea, cold symptoms, etc.) can be harsh. This makes me worried. Even scarier are the e-mails I begin receiving each morning that instruct, “Throughout the day, repeat: *This too shall pass.*”

The daily menu consists of a vial of chlorophyll or wheatgrass juice, followed by coconut water, watermelon juice, a cucumber-based raw green “soup,” spinach-cucumber-celery juice, another green “soup,” and a bare-bones salad of greens. In all, I'm allotted

SO WHICH CLEANSE FOR YOU?

Not cheap, not fun, yet still so appealing...

▶ JILL PETTIJOHN'S JILL'S CLEANSE

\$410 for five days. jillpettjohn.com.

THE DETAILS: Nutritional consultant Jill Pettijohn (Donna Karan's a client) was concocting detoxing juices for clients long before it was cool to cleanse. Her program consists of four blended beverages and two puréed soups daily and is one of the few that lets you customize for allergies or special dietary needs.

WHO DOES IT? Overworked CEOs and celebs like Nicole Kidman.

▶ ORGANIC AVENUE

\$350–\$500 for five days.

organicavenue.com.

THE DETAILS: OA offers gentle food cleanses, hard-core liquid cleanses, and everything in between. The company is serious about sustainable living and -business practices, and eco-istas will be pleased—the juices arrive in returnable glass containers.

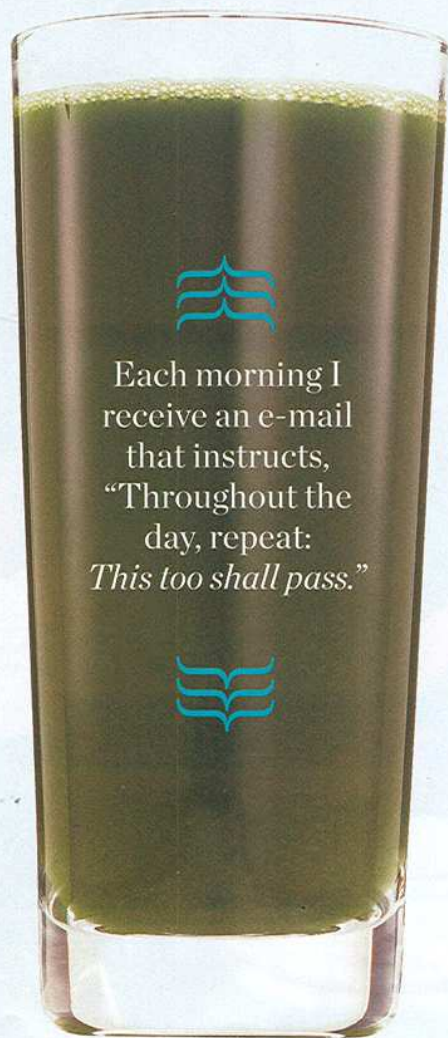
WHO DOES IT? Demi, Gwyneth, the haute-hippie set.

▶ DAVID KIRSCH 5-DAY DETOX KIT

\$175. davidkirschwellness.com.

THE DETAILS: The go-to trainer for NYC and Hollywood elite allows for one plain salad with grilled chicken or fish per day, supplemented by his protein shakes and vitamin drinks. High levels of protein—a rarity among cleanses—make for low levels of hunger, and Kirsch claims the program results in an average weight loss of five to ten pounds.

WHO DOES IT? Red-carpet types, anyone who needs to fit into a dress ASAP.



HEALTH & BEAUTY

▶ BLUEPRINTCLEANSE

\$60-\$90 per day.

blueprintcleanse.com.

THE DETAILS: Known for its six-juices-per-day plans, Blueprint offers three difficulty levels: the easiest incorporates more fruits, and the toughest is predominantly green juice. It's simple, user-friendly, and comes in portable cooler bags.

WHO DOES IT? The fashion set.

▶ COOLER CLEANSE

\$58 per day. coolercleanse.com.

THE DETAILS: When Salma Hayek needs to be extra svelte, she has Eric Helms, founder of a chain called Juice Generation, whip up juices for her. The two have now partnered to form Cooler Cleanse, which is so similar to Blueprint in its pricing, packaging, and programs that comparing them has become a common topic among cleanseaholics.

WHO DOES IT? Some of Hollywood's most famous bodies. Helms won't name names.

▶ JOULEBODY'S KICKSTART CLEANSE

\$225 for three days.

thekickstartdiet.com.

THE DETAILS: The 1,250-calories-per-day vegan program is customizable via a survey clients fill out during the ordering process, but each day is guaranteed to include three juices, two small meals (like hummus wraps and gazpacho), and a snack.

WHO DOES IT? Active types who can't hit the gym on juice alone.

▶ IZOCLEANZE

\$100-150 per day. izocleanze.com.

THE DETAILS: This calorie-spare program aims to thoroughly clean out your colon, liver, and spleen. The sheer quantity of liquid—vegetable juices, herbal brews, and alkalizing supplements—can make it a challenge.

WHO DOES IT? Yogis and extreme health nuts.

GRACE CLARKE

approximately 800 calories per day. In fact I'm consuming fewer, since much of the soup goes down the drain. I'm someone who adores kale and regularly drinks green juices, but I find these grainy blends as appealing as watered-down baby food.

Joy Bauer, a registered dietitian and *Today* show nutrition and diet expert, says that while she's a big fan of produce-heavy eating, research on alkaline diets is inconclusive. Even if there are benefits, she adds, they would be noticeable only over the long term, not in a few days. "The real problem," she says, "is that most of these types of cleanses are heavy on carbohydrates—fruits, vegetables, and juices—with little protein, which is counterproductive if you're viewing this as a way to lose weight or rev your metabolism."

I've done several cleanses before—ones that Mari contends were too fruity—and I think I know what to expect. But the first two days on this program are rougher than I'd anticipated. I have a constant dull headache that Mari claims is part of the detoxing process. On day three, however, I begin to turn a corner. My energy levels are decent, and I'm surprisingly focused at work. By day four I've pretty much stopped feeling hunger altogether. And on day five, I, a bona fide foodie, start to think that perhaps I can live this way forever—evidence that I am officially delusional. I wake up on day six, my first day off the cleanse, to find that I am six pounds lighter per my bathroom scale. It's mostly water weight, as the looseness of my wedding ring attests, but I'll take it.

I start the morning with the one thing I've been craving for three days: a hard-boiled egg. Organic Avenue has instructed me to eat mainly fruits and vegetables for a day or two postcleanse, but in my world, when cravings for candy are replaced by cravings for eggs, it is a big victory. On past cleanses, I often felt that I was perpetually downing exclusively sweet-tasting liquids, which made me wonder whether I was actually weaning myself off my sugar and starch addictions or just abetting them with liquid forms. This time feels different. Perhaps the alkaline nature of my cleanse has made my insides slightly less hospitable to lurking evil forces—but perhaps not. All I know is that several weeks later, my 4 P.M. chocolate cravings, usually so reliable, have yet to creep back in. ❖