



# ROBERT IRVINE

MAGAZINE

November 2016

*Nothing is Impossible*

## THANKSGIVING FEAST SPECIAL

ALL NEW RECIPES FOR TURKEY DAY

**ROBERT'S ADVICE ON THE BIG MEAL:**  
CHEAT RIGHT AND MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

## REAL HERO

Wounded warrior Michael  
Schlitz and his journey  
back from the brink

## RESTAURANT: IMPOSSIBLE

BEHIND THE TURNING POINT  
THAT DEFINED THE SHOW



# ROBERT IRVINE MAGAZINE

Nothing is Impossible

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MAGAZINE

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## THE ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

The best way to allow more abundance into your life: Be grateful for everything that you have. Carry the spirit of Thanksgiving with you all year round. And read Robert's column on how to treat the day itself on Pg. 4.

and has turned his attention to restoring quality of life for all people in wheelchairs.

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91 surgeries later, he is living comfortably, and that's just the start of his incredible story.

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# GRATITUDE WITHOUT WORRY

On Thanksgiving, you should count your blessings, not your calories.

People ask me for more cooking advice around Thanksgiving than at any other time of year. They want to know if they should brine their turkey or not, fry it or roast it, how to stuff it, and how to make some unique sides. For those answers, you can check out the Thanksgiving recipe feature beginning on page 27.

But lately, the questions have begun to change. Because of my passion for fitness, people are now asking me how to make the meal healthier and how to control their portions. They're asking me how to make things like low-fat gravy, low-carb stuffing, and sugar-free desserts. I've gotten so many of these healthy Thanksgiving questions I felt compelled to respond here with a definitive answer: **YOU'RE ASKING THE WRONG GUY.**

It's Thanksgiving! It's a wonderful holiday where we should be surrounded by family and feeling nothing but gratitude for the incredible abundance we enjoy in this country. I can't think of a better way to ruin it than by worrying about how many calories or grams of fat are in a particular dish. We all need a cheat meal now and then. I'm pretty sure you change your schedule so that your next one falls on Thursday, November 24. That's the day where you should eat and drink what you want and answer to no one.

Now, with that said, there are two



Follow Robert on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#).



# ROBERT'S LETTER



important things you need to do in order to enjoy the day and not have it backfire on your health and physique:

**1) Work out on Thanksgiving morning.** Personally, I'd put in an intense weight session; the more you deplete your muscles of glycogen, the more they'll be able to actually put the extra calories to good use. Bodybuilders would call this an overfeed day and it's necessary to keep muscle growing.

**2) Send the leftovers home with other people.** The free-for-all holiday only works to your advantage if you immediately return to a normal calorie count the day after. Eating

an excess of calories on Thanksgiving actually revs your metabolism to burn at a higher rate. When you eat cleaner and fewer calories that Friday, you'll still be burning at Thursday's rate and you'll burn off most of the extra calories. You don't have to be as totally precise as fitness enthusiasts would be when they cycle carbs and calories, but you do need to be burning cleaner fuel. That means you can have leftover turkey breast and greens, but not the bread, mashed potatoes, and pie.

It's really not that complicated! Your body can make good use of a cheat meal, but a cheat week can

add weight very quickly and send your mood and motivation plummeting. Enjoy the day, have a glass of wine or two, and then have the discipline to immediately refocus on your goals.

And above all, take a deep breath and enjoy everything you have. Count your blessings, not your calories.

Yours in health,



# FACE TIME

Beating acne came down to one crucial change.

By Gail Kim-Irvine



Acne is hard enough to deal with as a teenager. On top of all the other pressures you're facing, waking up to a big zit on your face is enough to send you running back to bed, afraid to face the world. But having experienced cystic acne as an adult, I'd argue that dealing with it later in life is even worse. For one thing, few adults have to deal with serious acne. In high school at least it seemed like half the other kids were going through the same thing. As an adult, however, you're in a minority. Walking into work with serious acne draws even more curious looks because your peers aren't as used to seeing it all the time.

The fact that I make my living on camera made it even harder for me. I can't tell you how many times I've gone out to TNA Wrestling's production truck to ask them not to zoom in on my face that night because I was dealing with another serious breakout.

Cystic acne is something I've dealt with for the last 15 years, and only managed to solve very recently. I had always assumed that my acne was hereditary because my mom had it until she was in her mid-40s. But knowing what was in store for me didn't make it any easier. At various times my dermatologist put me on Accutane, antibiotics, and Proactiv, all with mixed results. The only thing that actually worked were injections, which I needed just about every week. In the meantime, I'd dread breakouts before shows, interviews, and other appearances.

The last straw came two years ago when I was with Robert at the Miami Food and Wine Festival. We were making the rounds and

Follow Gail on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).



# GAIL'S CORNER



A thorough, daily face care routine will make you appear years younger. But be careful not to over-wash your face; in the morning, a splash of water can do the trick.

trying different foods and all of a sudden I had the worst cyst breakout of my life. I immediately went to my doctor to get blood tests for food allergies. The results for each food category came back as low or moderate. I then tried an elimination diet (which we addressed on Pg. 48 of our July/August issue) and found out that milk was the culprit all along. I never suspected that I might have a dairy allergy—I only use milk for my coffee or tea—but that little bit was causing me to break out.

Since ditching dairy, my skin has improved 10-fold.

Whether you're dealing with moderate or severe acne—or just want to prevent it and keep your

skin looking young—you can beat it with the right plan of attack. Here are the four most important things I've learned.

1) Wash your face every night. It sounds like a no-brainer, but you'd be amazed how many women I know who don't do this. Especially if you wear makeup, this is an absolute must. Failing to do this will age you fast.

2) In the morning, splash your face with water and use a light sunscreen. Since I wash my face at night, I don't usually wash it in the morning because over-washing can dry out your skin. You might differ, but I've found this works well for me.

3) Drink a lot of water. More than using an expensive moisturizing

cream, the best moisturizing you can do for your skin is to drink a ton of water. People with acne usually think they need to dry out their skin because it feels oily, but what you really need is balance. Drinking plenty of water helps you achieve that balance.

4) Form a good relationship with a dermatologist. If you have a serious issue to work through like I did, find a dermatologist who's willing to go the distance with you to figure out what the root of the problem is. No medical professional of any kind ever has all the answers. But the ones who are willing to take the time to listen to you and problem solve will usually find the answers you need.

# HIGH ANXIETY



Manage anxiety and take back control of your life.

**Q:** *I have a high-stress job and have a lot of anxiety about it. I get chest pains and I sweat whenever there's a big project at work. When I find time to meditate, I find that helps, but what can I do to manage it from moment to moment? — J. Finn, via the web*

**A:** Anxiety is a complex issue. It's a very distinct emotion that manifests physiologically. That sweaty palm, dry mouth, heart racing sense when we feel pain, fear or unease—all of that is anxiety. It is a normal emotion that everyone feels when you encounter a difficult or unusual situation that creates stress. It can also be an overreaction to these circumstances that can interfere with one's normal daily activi-

ties. How we manage these feelings makes a huge difference.

Anxiety comes from a variety of reactions to different social situations, fears or panic, or a general feeling of a being out of control in certain circumstances. Anxiety can awaken emotions that have nothing to do with the present situation but may remind us of a prior anxiety-provoking experience.

The full list of symptoms includes:



# DOCTOR SCHUTZ

- Feeling of panic, fear or unease
- Sleeping problems or fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Dry mouth and cold, sweaty or tingling sensation in hands or feet
- Nausea
- Racing heartbeat or shortness of breath
- Muscle tension

A number of factors that predispose us to Anxiety include:

- Shyness in childhood
- Lower socioeconomic group
- Stressful life events including divorce, loss of a spouse
- Family history of anxiety

Some other conditions are associated with anxiety and can reproduce the same physiological reactions:

- Post traumatic stress disorder or PTSD
- Phobias or irrational fear of different things or circumstances
- Obsessive compulsive disorder

So what can you do about anxiety? First, you might think of giving yourself a break. If not an actual break from work, then a mental break where you let a few seemingly important items on your to list go by the wayside. Striving to be perfect can, in fact, be a major source of anxiety. You want a perfect job, home life, body type, time balance, and luxury possessions all at once? In the process of trying to put together that kind of mythical perfect life you're going to give yourself a lot of anxiety. Making the best effort you can in life is obviously important, but not everything will work all the time. Allow yourself the room to be imperfect. You are not in control everything so

concentrate only on what you can control.

On a day-to-day basis, here are some simple things you can do to manage anxiety:

- Take a time out. Count to 10, take a deep breath or practice other relaxation techniques such as yoga, massage, or meditation.
- Get enough sleep; try for at least 7 hours.
- Dehydration can create anxiety, so drink plenty of water.
- Pay attention to food or drink sensitivities that might alter your mood. Consider keeping a food log to examine any possible cause-and-effect relationships.
- Avoid foods with caffeine or alcohol.
- Eat a breakfast with protein and complex carbohydrates to maintain a more steady blood sugar level and keeps you feeling fuller longer.
- Exercise.

- Try to avoid situations that have provoked anxiety for you in the past.

- Get involved in community activities that can help you develop a feeling of connectedness.
- Talk to someone either personally or professionally and don't bottle up your emotions until they overwhelm you.

If these strategies do not work, professional help and medication is available to help control the symptoms.

Anxiety is a part of life that we all experience. How we address this is the most important thing. Lifestyle changes and behavior modification can help to a great degree but one may need counselling or other assistance to return to a feeling of wellness.

*[Dr. Michael Schutz](#) is a urologist practicing at the Jersey Urology Group in Somers Point, NJ.*



Expecting perfect performance from yourself is a good way to create a lot of anxiety and have the opposite of the desired effect. Give yourself permission to be human.

# RYAN REED



Diagnosed with Type I diabetes, Ryan Reed was supposed to quit on his dreams of being a race car driver. But quitting is one thing he doesn't know how to do.

Ever since he was a kid, Ryan Reed wanted to drive a race car for a living. A childhood spent go-kart racing with his dad set him on a path to doing the thing he loved most in life. Today, he lives out that dream, driving the No. 16 Ford Mustang for the

Roush Fenway Racing team.

But one day just over five years ago, that dream nearly fell apart. He suffered from fatigue, weight loss, and extreme thirst, which his doctor diagnosed on the spot as Type I diabetes. The potentially deadly autoimmune disease

can cause nerve and kidney damage as well as low-sugar-related blackouts. Racing cars, his doctor told him, was out of the question.

"At the time it was the most devastating moment of my life," says Reed, who was 17 at the time. "I had always dreamed of



# CELEBRITY SPOTLIGHT

driving in NASCAR. All of that seemed to go up in flames in one trip to the doctor's office."

But after the news sunk in, Reed decided he had nothing to lose by doing as much research as he could to find out if he could manage his disease and still pursue his dream. The biggest obstacle was monitoring his blood sugar during races, which can last over three hours.

The problem was solved with a new innovation; today, he has a wireless monitor on the dashboard of his race car. There is a sensor on his stomach with a hair wire that penetrates the skin sending readouts to his dash. Should he need a shot of insulin during a race, one of his pit crew members is designated to deliver a shot of insulin to the bullseye painted on the left leg of his firesuit.

"We've practiced it, but thankfully we haven't had to do it yet," Reed says.

Reed, who works with Lilly Diabetes and the American Diabetes Association, says he wants people with diabetes to know that they can still pursue their dreams.

"There are so many stereotypes about diabetes," Reed says. "It's important to learn about it. If you do have it, you have to manage it and listen to your doctor. But you can still get out there and live life to the fullest."



Above, Reed settles into the driver's seat on race day. Below, he celebrates his first career win at Daytona Speedway. To learn more about Lilly Diabetes, visit: [lillydiabetes.com](http://lillydiabetes.com).



# IN THE GYM: PRO TIPS



When done correctly, the overhead squat builds muscle everywhere.

## NOW TRY THIS

Reap big benefits from one of the best exercises you're not doing.

The overhead squat is not a parlor trick for the incredibly fit. Squatting with the bar overhead and your arms fully extended is much more difficult than a standard back squat, or even a front squat, and requires a lot of core strength and stability. You're probably not very good at it, and that's kind of the point: The exercises you're the worst at highlight the areas you need to work on the most. The overhead squat is definitely worth doing. Just check your ego, lighten the load, and do it right, following these steps.

1) **Start from the bottom.** This means using an empty bar or no

bar at all. You can start by simply squatting with your hands overhead, elbows fully extended. Brace your core. You don't have to hold your breath, but your abs should be very tight.

2) **Squat low to the ground.** Initiate the move from your hips. Stick your butt out and hinge at the hips before bending your knees.

3) **Keep your chest up** as you descend. Holding the weight overhead will make you want to bow forward and look at the floor. Keep your core tight and resist the urge to fall forward.

4) **Drive through your heels,**

activating your glutes, to return to the start. In this top position you can breathe before going on to the next rep. Don't relax or breathe when you're at the bottom of the move.

Over time, as you build proficiency with this move, you'll develop a stronger core and healthier spine, particularly your lower back. You'll likely feel some aches in your lower back at the start and if they become too much, back off the overhead squatting for a bit. But if you stay committed, you're going to address the problems that are causing those very same aches and pains.



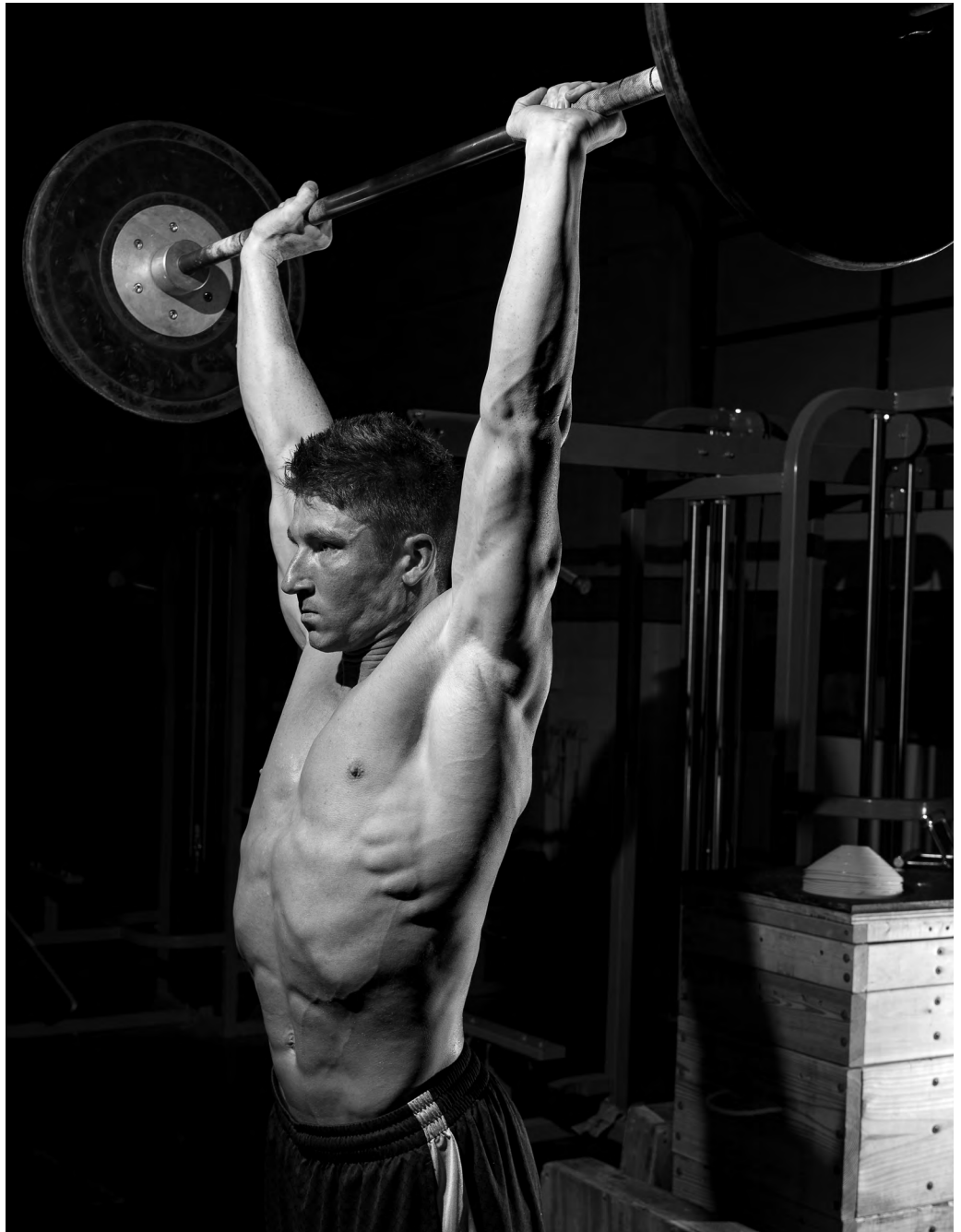
## IN THE GYM: WORKOUT OF THE MONTH

# THE BARBELL COMPLEX WORKOUT

One bar is all you need for this pulse-pounding total-body thrash.

**DIRECTIONS:** This barbell complex doesn't just hit every muscle group, it's also a fun and challenging way to get your workout in. After a thorough warmup, load a barbell and set it at your feet. Then complete 10 rounds as quickly possible while keeping good form on all the exercises.

**THE CATCH:** The number of reps escalates as you go on, starting with one rep on all exercises in Round One, moving up to two reps in Round Two, and so on up to 10 reps in Round 10. Record how long it took you to work up to 10 rounds for reference and try to beat that number in future workouts. Make sure to do at least 10 minutes of a cool-down—light jogging or walking on a treadmill—and stretch before leaving the gym.



On thrusters, the power to push the bar overhead should come from your legs. Learn how to do them on the next page.

# IN THE GYM: WORKOUT OF THE MONTH



Once you've found a comfort zone with front squats, you can use just your middle and index fingers to hold the bar in place against the front part of your shoulders.

## THE BARBELL COMPLEX WORKOUT

### EXERCISE

Barbell Pushup  
Sumo High Pull  
Bentover Row  
Front Squat  
Thruster

### EXERCISE DESCRIPTIONS

**BARBELL PUSHUP:** Get into a pushup position with both hands on the loaded barbell. Keep your body in a straight line from ankles to shoulders. Perform pushups, getting your chest to the bar on each

rep. Squeeze the bar tight to keep it from rolling away from you.

**SUMO HIGH PULL:** Take a wide stance and spread your feet so that your toes point out. Squat down to grab the bar with an overhand grip. Keeping your back flat, stand up explosively and pull the bar up to your chin.

**BENTOVER ROW:** Grab the bar with an overhand grip and bend at the waist, keeping your back flat. Extend your arms fully, then row the bar into your stomach near the bottom of your ribcage.

**FRONT SQUAT:** Set the bar across your front delts and collarbones, holding the bar in place using just your middle and index fingers (pictured) or by crossing your arms in front of you. Squat low to the ground, aiming to get the top of your thighs parallel to the floor on each rep.

**THRUSTER:** With the bar in the front squat position, switch to an overhand, shoulder-width grip. Squat low to the ground, then explode upward, pressing the bar overhead at the top of the rep. This should be one fluid motion.



## IN THE KITCHEN: GEAR

# MULTIFUNCTIONAL

Equipment that's as versatile as you.

### UNDER ARMOUR STORM UNDENIABLE II

This all-purpose bag from Under Armour can simultaneously handle gym and work duty. Its main compartment is big enough to fit an NBA-sized basketball and it sports separate compartments for sweaty clothes and two water bottle pockets. Its padded laptop sleeve is big enough for a 15" computer. Water-resistant with soft cushioned shoulder straps, it will perfectly balance whatever you load it up with, and remain comfortable on long commutes, outdoor training adventures, or whatever else life has in store.

\$69.95, [underarmour.com](http://underarmour.com)



### ONNIT MULTI-MAT

This yoga mat on steroids gives you an ideal training surface wherever you need one. Made of thick, recycled rubber with a textured grip ideal for barefoot training, you get a good surface for bodyweight workouts, stretching, yoga, and more, whether you set it on a wood floor, a carpet, or the grass outside.

\$39.95, [onnit.com](http://onnit.com)



### TRX RIP TRAINER

This heavy steel bar with a bungee tether lends itself to a unique combination of explosive rotational moves, presses, and anti-rotational stability work. Ideal for HIIT (high intensity interval training) and endurance training. See it in action in the link below.

\$189.95, [trxtraining.com](http://trxtraining.com)



# PAN-SEARED BRANZINO

So healthy you won't believe how good it tastes.



### SERVES 4

#### YOU'LL NEED

Four 6- to 7-oz branzino fillets;  
skin-on, boneless  
¼ cup grapeseed oil\*  
½ cup all-purpose flour  
1 cup white wine  
2 cups mushroom or low-sodium  
vegetable broth  
1 cup fresh mushrooms, quartered  
1 tbsp fresh parsley, minced  
1 tbsp fresh thyme, minced  
1 tsp fresh rosemary, minced  
1 tsp fresh garlic, minced  
2 oz (¼ stick) unsalted butter  
1 ½ tsp salt  
1 ½ tsp ground white pepper

#### MAKE IT

1) Heat 1 tbsp of oil in sauté pan over medium high heat, to verge of smoking.  
2) Combine salt and pepper with flour, coat both sides of each fillet.  
3) Sauté fillets until golden brown, 2-3 mins. each side, then keep warm on a plate covered with foil until ready to serve.  
4) Add wine to the sauté pan to deglaze and allow liquid to reduce by half, about 3-4 minutes, then add stock and reduce by ¾, about 4-5 mins.  
5) Add mushrooms, herbs and garlic. Stir and reduce by about ½, about 2-3 minutes. Remove from

heat and whisk in butter.

6) Plate the fillets, top with pan sauce and serve.

#### THE MACROS

CALORIES	344
PROTEIN	15 g
FAT	26 g
CARBS	9 g

\*Grapeseed oil is a healthy fat, but if you're watching your macros or overall calories, you lower the numbers significantly by replacing the grapeseed oil with natural cooking spray, which changes the nutrition info thusly: 223 calories; 15g protein; 9g carbs; 13g fat.



## IN THE KITCHEN: RECIPE

# LEMON CHICKEN FRANCAISE

The capers are optional. The extra napkins are mandatory.

Serves 6

### YOU'LL NEED

6 boneless, skinless chicken breasts  
1 cup all-purpose flour  
Salt  
Pepper  
6 eggs  
2 tbsp grated parmesan cheese  
1 tsp chives, fine chop  
2 tbsp grapeseed oil  
½ cup white wine  
Juice of 1 lemon  
1 tbsp capers (optional)  
2 tbsp butter  
¼ cup parsley, chopped

### MAKE IT

1) Place the chicken breasts on a cutting board and cover them with plastic wrap. Pound the chicken with a flat mallet until they are about ¼-inch thick.  
2) Place the flour in a shallow pan and season with salt and pepper.  
3) In a mixing bowl, beat the eggs with the chopped chives and parmesan cheese.  
4) Heat the oil in a skillet over medium heat.  
5) Dredge the chicken breasts in the seasoned flour, then dip them in the egg mixture. Place the egg-coated chicken in the skillet and sauté 2 to 3 minutes on both sides until golden brown. Continue to cook until no pink remains; the meat should be white all the way through. Set aside.  
6) Add the wine and lemon juice



to the same pan and simmer for 5 minutes to reduce. Roll the butter in some flour and add it to the pan. Turn the heat down and stir until the sauce thickens.  
7) Add the capers (if desired) and parsley once the butter has melted.  
8) Add the chicken back to the pan and spoon the sauce on top of the chicken. Place the chicken on

a platter and spoon the sauce on top of the chicken and serve family style.

### THE MACROS

CALORIES:	455
PROTEIN:	42 g
FAT:	22 g
CARBS:	18 g

## IN THE KITCHEN: GEAR

# FALL FAVORITES

Properly set the table—and the mood.



### ◀ MOUNTAIN WEAVE TABLECLOTH

Each mountain weave tablecloth evokes a colonial hand-spun feel that brings out the spirit of the Thanksgiving season in a way that a turkey- or leaf-print tablecloth never could. Available in five sizes and 23 gorgeous natural tones.

Starting at \$59.95,  
[vermontcountrystore.com](http://vermontcountrystore.com)

### THE HOLIDAY JOURNAL

With 10 years of pages dedicated to each of the major holidays—Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and other celebrations like birthdays—this holiday journal is a fun way to involve the whole family in capturing precious moments for posterity—real memories and feelings that no camera can capture.

\$35, [uncommongoods.com](http://uncommongoods.com)



### SAUCE MASTER WHISK

Making a rich, hearty gravy requires a tool that easily scrapes up those crusty bits of skin and stuffing off the bottom of the roasting pan while it mixes. This stainless steel Sauce Master Whisk from Norpro Krona does just that, and bounces back to its original form no matter how much pressure you apply. ▼

\$8.25, [jet.com](http://jet.com)





# HOPE, AND A PLAN, FOR THE WHEELCHAIR-BOUND



Dan Highcock knows that being confined to a wheelchair doesn't have to mean giving up on your dreams. His new training manual, [\*Zero Assistance Resistance Training\*](#), aims to give those in wheelchairs improved confidence and quality of life.

BY PAUL ROBERTS /// PHOTOS BY MATT MARSH

# DAN HIGHCOCK



Highcock is a personal trainer who clearly practices what he preaches; he's in better shape than most able-bodied men. Follow him on [Twitter](#).

Most five-year-olds are reluctant to leave their mother's side, never mind anxious to find adventure on their own. But Dan Highcock wasn't like most kids. At that age, he and his cousin already had mini motocross bikes that they would ride with their uncle.

"My cousin didn't need stabilizers on his bike," Highcock says. "It pissed me off so the first chance I had to ride without stabilizers I went a bit crazy. I opened the throttle too much and crashed the bike."

When he crashed, the bike's handlebars pinned him at the waist and he suffered major dam-

age to his left hip. He was diagnosed with necrosis of the hip, which limits blood supply to the affected area and forced him into a wheelchair.

*"Im confident this is going to help a lot of people."*

"I was in a full plaster cast when I got home," Highcock recalls. "I

was very weak. What little muscle I had was wasted away. My mother was super protective and wouldn't let me do anything."

Yet, throughout his recovery, whenever his mom left the room, he'd get up and do a lap around the chair, holding it for balance. The same determination that had him speeding around in the first place thankfully hadn't left him. It was difficult, painful work that left him exhausted, but eventually he built himself up so that he could do two laps around the chair.

As he got older and understood his condition better, he became



# DAN HIGHCOCK

obsessed with training and nutrition.

"I learned that for bones to heal you need blood supply, and I had a lack of blood supply with my condition," Highcock says. "So I knew training could help. Walking around the chair, then getting on a stationary bike, and I built it up from there. Within a couple of years, I could walk around on my own."

By the time he got to high school, he could walk for short bouts but still needed a wheelchair most of the time. Bullies targeted him until they found out he could fight back. Highcock's physical education teacher, realizing the boy had a competitive spirit, encouraged him to play wheelchair basketball.

"This was 20 years ago and I had never heard of it so I actually laughed," Highcock says. But when he tried out, he found it to be a natural fit.

Highcock then dedicated himself to training and playing professional ball, and was a member of Great Britain's Paralympic team in 2012. The team made it to the bronze medal game, where they lost to the US. He now works full-time as a personal trainer who clearly practices what he preaches. He's in better shape than most able-bodied men, and he's an inspiration to his many clients who are also disabled.

"My condition gets worse as I get older," he says. "I will be confined to a wheelchair full time at some point. It could be next week, next year, or in five years.



I used to walk quite a lot more than I do now. Anything that has a lot of impact in the hip is very painful. But I do everything I want to do."

During the season Highcock trains with very high intensity, using tri-sets and quad-sets

and not a lot of rest. He recently benched 155 kilos (or 342 pounds), and up until last year could shallow squat over 250 pounds.

His disabled clients in turn inspired him to write his new book, *Zero Assistance Resistance Training*,

# DAN HIGHCOCK

now available on [Amazon](#) and through other book retailers.

“I’ve been around wheelchair athletes most of my life,” Highcock says. “The clients that I have, a lot of them had the same problems, so I had to come up with something that would be completely accessible to everyone. It had to build strength, muscle size, improve conditioning, and help prevent injuries—all in the wheelchair. This program does that.”

Highcock’s full system uses dumbbells, cables, and resistance bands, mixed into four weekly sessions. He even invented his own exercise, modifying a farmer’s walk into what he calls a farmer’s push.

He explains, “People in wheelchairs, a lot of them think they can’t really engage their core. So what I have them do is hold the dumbbell with one hand and push the chair with the other—keeping the chair going in a straight line. You have to really engage your core to do that. Guys were coming up to me saying they had never felt their core work that way before.”

The book published this past September and the feedback has been enormously positive from both people who have tried it and from doctors who recommend it to their patients. Accessibility is the key to its popularity, Highcock says.

“It’s not just for people already training, but for people who don’t have the confidence and aren’t doing anything at all right now,” he says. “It’s totally accessible. And once they get into it, their quality of life is going to be much better. Day to day tasks are going to be much easier.”



Highcock has discovered that he now has clients all over the world. They e-mail him or find him on social media to say thank you for the program that’s changing their lives. The otherwise stoic Brit admits, “My bottom lip quivered on a few of those.”

Highcock says he has three more books in the works which, taken together, will encompass a full year of progressive training.

“My vision is to get people doing something in the first book, then once they get some confidence, to push the limits beyond that,” he says. “There’s no reason wheelchair users shouldn’t be able to do most of what everyone else is doing in the gym. I’m confident that, on a global scale, this is going to help a whole lot of people.”





# AFTER **RESTAURANT** **IMPOSSIBLE**

Robert's visit to Saponi D'Italia in Fountain Hills, AZ, marked a turning point for the restaurant—and for his own show.

By Matt Tuthill



Robert meets with the Manno family, owners of Saponi D'Italia, whose dysfunction was ripping apart their business and home lives.

# RESTAURANT: IMPOSSIBLE

Looking back at the history of *Restaurant: Impossible*, it's easy to forget that not every restaurant was falling apart. Some of the kitchens were actually clean. Some of the food was actually pretty good. And some of the dining rooms were bright and welcoming. And yet, with all that going right, some restaurants such as these were still failing and desperate for Robert's help.

When he arrived at Saponi D'Italia in Fountain Hills, AZ in 2012, Robert found an eatery with no outward signs of decay. It was clean and bright, and the head chef, Gasper Manno, had been making good pizza for decades. So what was wrong? When Robert sat for a service he got his first clue: The wait staff wasn't fast or friendly and argued amongst themselves in front of customers. Investigating why Gasper and his wife Maria had lost control of the wait staff led to revelations of dysfunction that threatened to tear both the restaurant and the family apart.

Gasper was the head chef and Maria was supposed to run the front of the house, yet Gasper would consistently meddle with Maria's work. The couple worked alongside their two sons, Jonathan and David, who had to listen to their parents' constant bickering throughout their shifts and when they got home.

When Robert decided to tackle these problems head on, it wouldn't just change Saponi D'Italia and the life of its owners, it would alter the course of *Restaurant: Impossible* forever. As discussed in last month's cover feature and editor's letter, the show originally focused only on cosmetic changes and transforming the menu. But over time it began to address the relationship issues that are often the root cause of a business' failure. Robert had begun to incorporate these kinds of problems into the show, but never before had he come face-to-face with a restaurant that looked totally fine from the outside but was still failing because its owners couldn't get along.

Gasper originally applied to be on *Restaurant:*



Gasper was an old pro at making pizza and pasta, but Robert wanted to liven up the menu. Robert added a hanger steak, bottom, which is one of Saponi D'Italia's top sellers today.



# RESTAURANT: IMPOSSIBLE

*Impossible.* He and Maria were over \$200,000 in debt at the time and the struggles were so bad that he decided he would have to shutter the restaurant that year if *R:I* didn't answer the call. The roots of the restaurant's problems are hard to trace because in the face of failure, the family's lack of money became the new focal point on which most of the fighting was centered.

"When you're struggling and there's no money, then that becomes the main problem," Gasper says. "And no matter what we tried it just didn't work. Then we're arguing in front of the customers, and that just makes it worse."

During a sit-down with the fam-

ily, Robert described their problems as a "four-way tug of war."

Gasper summed up his frustrations saying, "Everything I touch turns to garbage. I come to work every day and I can't make a cent." Maria said she carried a tremendous amount of guilt because opening the restaurant had been her idea, and so she blamed herself for all of the family's problems.

Robert told them that the negative mindset was snowballing and infecting all parts of the business. He then asked each of them to identify the family member that frustrated them the most. Then he gave them homework to write a letter explaining everything they loved about that person. Tears

flowed freely on both days as the family hashed out previously unspoken gripes. After the cathartic release, they were ready to move forward.

"When Robert came here the first day there was so much anger with the way Gasper would talk to me," Maria says. "We wrote our letters and that was a wakeup call. We didn't need more therapy. We figured out it was the business. It was the money. It's a lot of stress."

The positive impact of meeting with Robert had an immediate ripple effect on their home and business lives.

"It did wonders for my family," Maria says. "To me, Robert's my angel. He saved my restaurant, but a restaurant is replaceable. I mean this from the bottom of my heart: He saved my family and a family is not replaceable."

Along with a fresh makeover to the dining room and a tweak of the menu, Saporì D'Italia was back in business in a major way. Gasper says the restaurant has maintained a 30% increase of business in the years since. For reference, in Saporì D'Italia's lean years, the Mannos pulled in about \$500,000 in gross revenue. They've pulled in steadily increasing numbers since appearing on *Restaurant: Impossible*, with \$780,000 in gross revenue in 2015. For 2016, Gasper says they're well on their way to shattering that high mark.

That's not to say everything has stayed the same since Robert left.



The joy of cooking is back on the menu at Saporì D'Italia.

# RESTAURANT: IMPOSSIBLE



Robert stands by as Maria and Gasper get a look at their new restaurant for the first time. Since appearing on *Restaurant: Impossible*, Saponi D'Italia experienced an immediate spike in business and has been able to maintain a steady 30% increase in revenue.

Saponi D'Italia is currently in the process of another makeover. The bright green used to paint the walls during the show worked at the time, Gasper says, but he wanted to be proactive about keeping things looking new rather than waiting for them to get stale. The furniture also needs replacing, which is actually a sign of success—enough customers have been served to warrant replacing the chairs at a faster rate. As for the menu, Gasper says he has brought back most of his old menu, but has kept Robert's cucumber salad and hanger steak recipes, which are customer favorites.

Gasper also replaced the entire kitchen staff since the show ran. "I don't hire people because they work for the greatest restaurants

in the world," Gasper says. "I hire people who want to work hard and have a willingness to learn. I can teach them how to cook. I can't change their character."

David still works at Saponi D'Italia and Maria says his future is at the restaurant. Jonathan, meanwhile, is trying his hand at other pursuits. Maria and Gasper both support him and say the restaurant is always there if he needs a backup plan.

Gasper says the decision to be on *Restaurant: Impossible* was the right one. From the outset he was intrigued by Robert's outsider perspective and the fact that he wouldn't play favorites as the Mannos tried to sort out their issues.

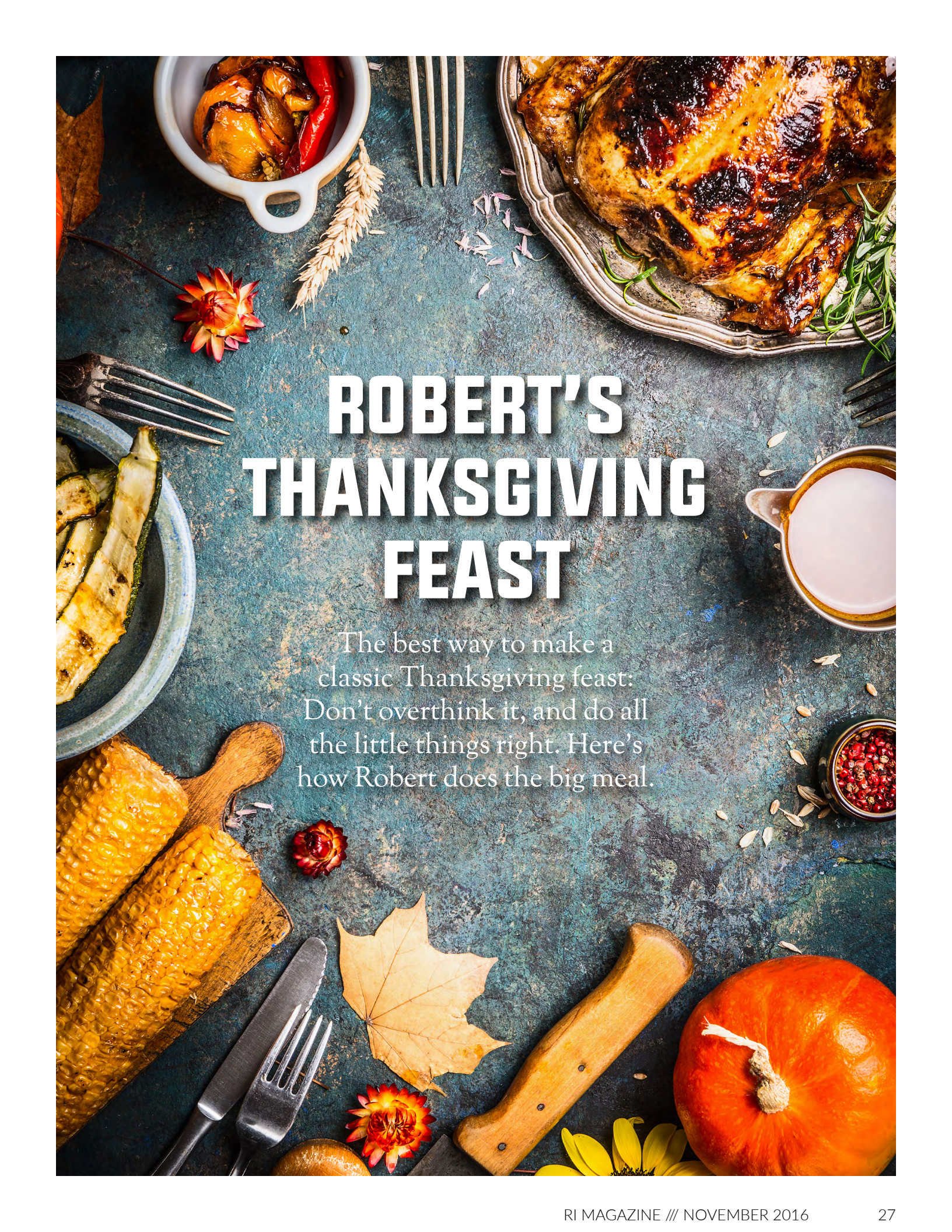
"It didn't matter who was right or wrong," Gasper says. "We were

probably all wrong. Robert could see that, but we couldn't."

Maria says she initially had reservations about putting herself and her family's problems in front of so many other people, but today she reserves nothing but glowing praise for Robert and his crew.

"I don't feel the guilt anymore," she says "I see the smiles on my kids' faces. I see my customers' faces. I'm a different person now. It was the best experience ever in my life. Because of Robert we are still together and we have a business that's getting stronger and stronger every day. All the credit goes to Robert Irvine. He is the most gentle, nicest person I've ever met. I hope he lives 1,000 years. I love him."





# ROBERT'S THANKSGIVING FEAST

The best way to make a classic Thanksgiving feast: Don't overthink it, and do all the little things right. Here's how Robert does the big meal.



# THANKSGIVING FEAST



WHERE ARE THE MACROS? As Robert says in this month's editor's letter on Pg. 4, Thanksgiving is a day to count your blessings, not your calories. If, however, you're interested in calculating macros for reference or because you want to prepare any of these dishes on a non-holiday, refer to the USDA's food database [HERE](#).

## ROAST TURKEY

Serves 12

### YOU'LL NEED

1 20-pound turkey  
Kosher salt  
Fresh ground pepper  
1 tbsp ground red chili flakes  
1 cup unsalted butter, melted  
1 to 1½ tbsp unbleached flour  
¼ cup chopped fresh herbs (rosemary, thyme, sage)

### MAKE IT

1) Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Rub turkey with salt, pepper, and ground chili flakes and melted butter. Tuck wing tips under the breast, tie legs together loosely. Roast turkey at 450 degrees for 10 to 15 minutes, then drop heat to 375 degrees. Roast turkey 1½ hours. Baste with any pan juices.  
2) Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees and continue to roast turkey until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the thigh registers 165 degrees, basting and turning pan occasionally for even cooking, about 1½ to 2 hours longer.

3) Pour all pan juices into large measuring cup and spoon off fat that rises to surface. Transfer 2 tablespoons fat to large heavy saucepan and discard any remaining fat. Place turkey roasting pan over two burners. Add 3½ cups stock or broth. Bring to a boil over high heat, scraping up browned bits. Boil liquid until reduced to 1½ cups.  
4) Place saucepan with turkey fat over medium-high heat. Add flour. Whisk for 2 minutes, then whisk in stock. Boil until gravy thickens enough to coat spoon thinly. Add fresh herbs and season with salt and pepper.



# THANKSGIVING FEAST



## CORNBREAD STUFFING

**Serves 10**

### YOU'LL NEED

1½ lbs corn bread  
1½ lbs sourdough bread  
8 slices bacon  
5 tbsp butter  
3 cups chopped onions  
2 cups chopped celery  
1 cup chopped shallots  
¼ tsp sage  
¼ tbsp thyme  
2 Granny Smith apples, peeled and sliced  
1 lb fresh cranberries

1½ cups pecans, toasted, coarsely chopped  
2 cups chicken broth  
Salt and pepper to taste  
3 large eggs, beaten to blend

### MAKE IT

1) Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Cut cornbread and sourdough bread into ¾-inch cubes. Place on a baking sheet and toast until dry but not hard, about 15 minutes. Cool.  
2) Transfer to a large bowl. Butter an 8-by-8-by-2-inch baking dish. Cook bacon in a large heavy skillet over medium-high heat until crisp, about 6 minutes. Using tongs, transfer bacon to paper towels; reserve ¼ cup bacon dripping in skillet. Cool bacon and crumble. Add

butter to bacon drippings in skillet and melt over medium-high heat. Add onions, celery and shallots; sauté until just pale golden brown, about 10 minutes. Stir in sage and thyme. Add apples and cranberries to cubed bread. Mix in pecans and crumbled bacon. (This portion can be done a day ahead of time.) Cover and refrigerate.  
3) Stir 1½ cups chicken broth into stuffing. Add salt and pepper to taste. Mix in eggs. Moisten remaining cubes with rest of broth. Transfer to prepared dish. Bake stuffing in covered dish alongside turkey for an hour. Uncover stuffing and bake until top begins to crisp, about 5 minutes.

# THANKSGIVING FEAST

## ROAST BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH PANCETTA AND CARAWAY

Serves 6-8

### YOU'LL NEED

1½ lbs Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved lengthwise  
⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil  
½ tsp kosher salt  
¼ tsp freshly ground pepper  
8 oz pancetta, diced  
1 tsp caraway seeds

### MAKE IT

1) Preheat oven to 400 degrees.  
2) Steam Brussels sprouts until tender, shock in ice water to retain color. Toss Brussels sprouts with oil,



salt and pepper in a bowl until well coated.

3) In a skillet cook pancetta until crispy, then remove with a spoon. Add Brussels sprouts to pan and sauté. Sprinkle caraway seeds over

Brussels sprouts and toss, then spread out in a layer and roast in a 400-degree oven until sprouts are crisp-tender and well-browned, about 10 minutes more. Add pancetta and toss together.

## CRANBERRY SAUCE

Makes 2 cups

### YOU'LL NEED

12 oz bag fresh cranberries  
Zest and juice from 1 orange  
Zest and juice from 1 lemon  
⅔ cup brown sugar  
⅓ cup white sugar  
Optional: 2 ounces gold rum

### MAKE IT

Place all ingredients in a sauce pan and cook on medium-high heat for 15 to 20 minutes or until most of the liquid has reduced, stirring occasionally. You will hear the cranberries popping; don't worry, that's what you want them to do. Remove from heat and serve.



Cranberry sauce can be made days ahead and brought to room temperature or slightly heated before serving.



# THANKSGIVING FEAST

## HONEY BAKED SWEET POTATOES

Serves 6-8

### YOU'LL NEED

2¼ lbs red-skinned sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1½-inch pieces  
6 tbsp (¾ stick) melted unsalted butter

1 tsp fresh lemon juice  
3 tbsp honey  
1 cup brown sugar  
1 tbsp cinnamon  
1 tsp nutmeg  
Salt and pepper to taste



### MAKE IT

1) Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Toss sliced sweet potatoes with melted butter, lemon juice, honey, sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg.  
2) Arrange sweet potatoes on

baking dish and toss to coat. Sprinkle generously with salt and pepper. Bake sweet potatoes until tender when pierced with skewer, stirring and turning occasionally, about 50 minutes.

## BELGIAN ENDIVE SALAD, CRUMBLLED BLUE CHEESE, WALNUT VINAIGRETTE

Serves 6-8

### YOU'LL NEED

6 Belgian endive (about 1½ pounds)  
¼ pound crumbled Point Reyes blue cheese  
2 large Granny Smith apples, cored, peeled and cut in thin slivers  
1 cup roasted chopped walnuts  
2 tbsp red-wine vinegar  
2 tbsp chopped chives  
1 tsp Dijon mustard  
Salt and pepper  
3 tbsp vegetable oil  
2 tbsp walnut oil

### MAKE IT

1) Separate endive leaves, then thinly slice lengthwise and transfer to a large bowl. Mix in blue cheese, apples and chopped walnuts. Whisk together vinegar, chives, mustard, ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper in a bowl.  
2) Whisk in oils in a slow steady stream until emulsified. Toss endive with enough vinaigrette to lightly coat. Season with additional salt and pepper, if necessary.



# THANKSGIVING FEAST



## **HARICOT VERT (GREEN BEANS), ROASTED GARLIC, WILD MUSHROOMS AND CRISPY ONIONS**

**Serves 8-10**

### **YOU'LL NEED**

2 heads garlic in the skins  
2 lbs haricot vert (green beans), cleaned  
¾ lb assorted wild mushrooms  
¼ cup olive oil  
Salt and pepper  
¼ tsp cracked red chili flakes  
1 medium yellow onion  
3 tbsp unbleached flour mixed with salt and pepper  
¼ cup canola oil

2 tbsp chopped parsley  
2 tbsp chopped thyme  
1 tbsp chopped rosemary

### **MAKE IT**

1) Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Drizzle garlic with olive oil and roast in oven, 30-35 minutes, until tender; when cool, remove from husk and set aside.  
2) Clean green beans and blanch in salted boiling water. When tender, cool in an ice bath to retain color. Clean and cut wild mushrooms to desired size. Toss with olive oil, salt, pepper and chili flakes, then lay out on a sheet and roast at 350 degrees for 15 minutes.  
3) Shave onion paper thin, soak in cold water for 10 minutes. Remove from water and toss in seasoned flour.  
4) Heat canola oil in a large skillet and add onions; cook until crisp and remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Toss beans, mushrooms and garlic together in the pan and add the herbs. Add salt and pepper, if necessary. Toss with crispy onions.



# THANKSGIVING FEAST

## ROAST BEET SALAD WITH ORANGE VINAIGRETTE

Serves 6-8

### YOU'LL NEED

2 lbs fresh beets  
¼ cup sliced almonds, toasted  
Salt  
2 Bosc pears  
3 cups mache or baby arugula  
8 oz orange juice concentrate  
¼ cup Dijon mustard  
2 tbsp rice wine vinegar  
¼ tsp sesame oil

### MAKE IT

1) Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Roast beets until fork tender, 1 to 1½ hours. Cool. While beets are roasting, toast the almonds over moderate heat, until pale golden and season with salt.  
2) Combine the orange juice, mustard and vinegar. Add the oil and emulsify the ingredients. Place in a large bowl. Slip skins from beets and halve large beets. Cut into ¼-inch thick slices and add to dressing. Toss to coat. Quarter the pear and cut it into thin strips. Top salad with mache or arugula, then the pear strips. Garnish with almonds.

## CHOCOLATE & CRANBERRY TART

Serves 8-10

### YOU'LL NEED

#### Crust

1 ¼ cup instant oat  
¾ cup AP flour  
1/3 cup coconut oil  
1/4 cup honey  
2 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder  
¾ tsp kosher salt  
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon

#### Filling

1/2 tsp instant espresso powder  
¾ cup very hot water  
1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder  
7 oz dark chocolate, melted  
6 oz whole cranberry sauce  
2/3 cup honey  
2 tsp vanilla extract  
2/3 cup coconut oil  
1/4 tsp kosher salt

### MAKE IT

1) Preheat oven to 350 degrees  
2) Place all items for the crust in a



food processor and pulse until oats are coarsely ground. Pack evenly into a 9-inch tart pan with a removable bottom. Let cool for 20 minutes.

3) Dissolve the espresso into the hot water, place in a food processor and add cocoa powder, let sit for a few minutes to bloom. Add the

melted chocolate, honey, vanilla, coconut oil and salt and process for about 1 minute until its smooth. Fold in the whole cranberry and pour into tart shell. Place the refrigerator to set and firm up.  
4) Garnish with sea salt, cinnamon stick, powdered sugar and shaved chocolate and cranberries.



# BACK FROM THE BRINK

Gravely wounded in an IED attack, US Army SFC Michael Schlitz suffered burns on 85% of his body, lost both arms below the elbow, and flat lined 10 times in the ensuing months.

His survival is nothing short of a miracle, but the road to recovery was paved with an almost unfathomable 91 surgeries and counting.

Today, as an ambassador for the Gary Sinise Foundation, his mission is to let other wounded veterans know that they don't have to fight alone.

By Matt Tuthill /// Photos Courtesy of the Gary Sinise Foundation





# MICHAEL SCHLITZ

*Editor's Note: This is Part I of a two-part feature. Check back for the December issue of Robert Irvine Magazine for Part II.*

February 27, 2007 began just like any other for Army Ranger Michael Schlitz. He woke in the predawn hours and gathered his patrol to go over their mission for the day. If all went according to plan, they'd be out on the Iraqi roads for the next 15 hours, performing the plodding but crucial task of bomb disposal.

It was the height of the surge and Schlitz had just gotten his wish; he joined the Army in 1996 and had been eager to deploy since Sept. 11, 2001. In 2006, the 10th Mountain Division from New York finally got the call.

In the early days of the war, the number of KIAs on the American side was relatively low, but as the insurgency grew and the enemy learned to plan their attacks, casualties spiked, resulting in the surge, in which the US tripled its number of boots on the ground. The main culprit in the rise of combat deaths were IEDs, or improvised explosive devices, scattered on roads throughout the country.

Schlitz's company used powerful metal detectors and a convoy of armored vehicles to find and disarm these bombs. The most important vehicle in this convoy is the monstrous "buffalo" a truck so enormous and heavily armored, "you could detonate a 500-pound bomb underneath it and it would still run," Schlitz says.

In the course of bomb disposal work, IEDs often exploded underneath or near a buffalo—two or

three times per day, in some instances. Even after a beating like this, the vehicle was able to roll on with its occupants safely inside. However, repairing these vehicles and turning them around for another day in the field was terribly slow going.

On this particular day, Schlitz's patrol was short of armored vehicles. "My solution to that was to replace one of the heavily armored vehicles with a Humvee," Schlitz says. "You have a job that needs to get done no matter what. It's the call you have to make."

Two-and-a-half hours into the mission, Schlitz's convoy had just finished clearing a dead end street. The convoy slowly made its about-face, with Schlitz riding in the Humvee bringing up the rear. Un-



Schlitz, ready to go out on patrol during the height of the Iraq war surge.

beknownst to him, the convoy was rolling over a deep-buried IED—constructed from two artillery shells and a propane tank—not picked up by their metal detectors.

"We were near a culvert," or underground drainpipe, Schlitz says. "Sometimes they put them near those because to our equipment it might just look like part of the culvert."

Enemy spotters, knowing that IEDs had little effect on the buffalo, waited until Schlitz's Humvee was over the device and then detonated it. The explosion rocked the Humvee, sending shrapnel flying through the interior and spraying everything in range with propane. Two of the occupants were killed instantly, and a third burned to death inside the

# MICHAEL SCHLITZ



Schlitz speaks at the dedication for his new customized smart home, built by the Gary Sinise Foundation. Today, he is an ambassador for the foundation, letting other veterans who have returned home know that they don't fight their battles alone.

vehicle. Schlitz was thrown from the Humvee when the door on his side blew open.

He looked up from the road to see the damage. Instinct told him to run to help his friends, and that's exactly what he did. It all happened too fast for him to know that his uniform was on fire; when he ran to the vehicle, oxygen fed the flame and his body was engulfed.

"As I got close to the Humvee, that's when I felt the flames hit me in the face," Schlitz says. "I dropped my body armor real quick, got down on the ground, and started to roll. The heat was just so intense that my muscles basically locked up. Any

time you have an accelerant, whether it's gas, diesel, propane, when you roll that fire gets put out. But as you continue to roll, the area that just went out reignites. It would reignite every time I rolled and eventually I just locked up and was face down in the dirt."

Incredibly, and perhaps unfortunately, Schlitz didn't go into shock, and can remember his thought process during those agonizing moments.

"Everybody has a different experience with what crosses their mind at the very end," he says. "You know, the light-flashes-in-front-of-you kind of scenario. For me, I knew:

'I'm face down in the ground burning alive, and I'm going to die right here in Iraq. This is it for me.' The heat and the extreme pain I was in from being on fire was just so excruciating that I didn't see a way out of it. I could hear my guys yelling for me, and it gave me a little bit of hope, but at the same time I didn't know how far away they were. I didn't know what they could do for me."

When his squad mates hit him with the fire extinguisher, Schlitz describes the pain relief as instantaneous and that his body was overwhelmed with a cooling sensation.

"The second part of it was emotional, you know, I went from 'Here



# MICHAEL SCHLITZ

I'm going to die face down in the ground of Iraq' to "Alright, my guys are here, they're here to help me," he says. "I thought maybe I'm not going to die here."

But Schlitz's ordeal was just beginning. The medic for his unit had just died moments ago in the explosion. The remaining soldiers then faced a decision on how to move him. Some wanted to pick him up immediately and get him off the road, fearing it might be an ambush. One soldier, however, demanded they get the spine board and transport him properly. It was a decision that saved Schlitz's life.

To describe his condition at the time—and why the decision to get the spine board was so crucial—Schlitz uses a gruesome analogy.

"If you think about baked chicken," he says, "if you pull it out of the oven, the skin and meat just fall off the bone. That's the condition I was in, so had they dragged me off the ground, they would have killed me. This young sergeant—who I actually had taken some disciplinary actions against in the past—made the call to stop them from dragging me and to put me on the spine board."

Once Schlitz was on the spine board, his unit sheltered in place to protect him until a helicopter came for extraction. On board, a medic asked him his name and social. "I think I got it out," he says, "but then they hit me with the morphine, and

that's my last real memory for four months."

Later that day on an operating table in Baghdad, Schlitz flat lined three times. He was then flown to Landstuhl, Germany for more operations. Again, he kept flat lining and doctors kept reviving him. When he was finally stable enough to make the journey, he was flown back to the US to Brooke Army Medical Center

*"The Rangers... we had this thing: you never give up, you never quit, you always push forward. You've got to do that in life, as well."*

in San Antonio. More surgeries, and flat lining, followed. From the first day in Baghdad through his months in the hospital, Schlitz flat lined a total of 10 times.

His recollection of his time in ICU is hazy. He knows that family came to visit him and can recall being in the room but not in his body—and seeing family members who weren't actually there. Another scene he can't remember: with his mother Robbi doting at his bedside, he told her to quickly get his brother because it was time for him to go

and hang out with his dad, a Navy veteran who died in 1996. His mother refused, telling him he was still needed here.

"These are things that obviously make me reflect on my faith," he says.

But during his 10-month stay in the hospital Schlitz found that the psychological damage was as bad as any of his physical wounds.

People couldn't help but stare at his injuries, which had cost him both arms below the elbows, scarred his entire body, disfigured his face, and left him, essentially, with no nose. Doctors told him not to look in the mirror during his stay and to instead concentrate on rehab. But the pain was intense and he began to suffer from a condition called heterotopic ossification, or HO, a calcium buildup in the joints which affects burn victims and severely limits their range of motion. He frequently thought of suicide.

"I really struggled before I got my prosthetic arms," Schlitz says. "I was head to toe in bandages early on. I had no hands, I could barely see. I was 100% completely dependent on somebody else. That's not a life that anybody wants to live, you know what I mean? Your quality of life at that point, no matter how much people are trying to make it good, isn't good."

What hardened his resolve to live, however, was constant support.

"There were a few things that brought me out of it," Schlitz says. "The first one is my family and my community. Mom was there from

# MICHAEL SCHLITZ

the get-go. My brother was there for the first six months. I had my Ranger buddies and other guys from the 10th Mountain Division visiting me in the hospital. I was never really alone. I was never isolated. Had my mother not been there, had my comrades not been there, it would have been a very different story.”

Eventually, Schlitz regained his warrior spirit.

“The Rangers—and the Army in general—we had this thing: you never give up, you never quit, you always push forward,” he says. “These things are always drilled. You’ve got to do that in life, as well.”

When he finally got his prosthetics and could feed himself, he felt a huge leap of independence and saw “light at the end of the tunnel” and a future where he wouldn’t be completely dependent on his mother.

But prosthetics were just the beginning. When the Gary Sinise Foundation heard about Schlitz’s story, he became eligible for a custom-built smart home through the organization’s R.I.S.E. (Restoring Independence Supporting Empowerment) program. Schlitz now lives with his mother in a beautiful new home in Georgia that is specially equipped for his limitations. The conventional versions of everyday objects like light switches, shades, and thermostats make for significant hurdles when you’re using prosthetic hands. That’s why Schlitz’s smart home is equipped with an iPad that remote controls virtually all electronics in the house. Because of Georgia’s high humidity, the house was built with a self-dehumidifier that drains into the back yard. Schlitz also has trouble bending over, so electronic outlets are raised higher than normal.

Instead of knobs, each door has an easy-to-pull lever.

“The whole house is set up so that I can do everything whether my prosthetics are on or off,” he says.

Since regaining his independence, Schlitz has found a new mission: Stemming the epidemic of veteran suicide. He now works as an ambassador for the Gary Sinise Foundation to speak to the plight of veterans whose wounds are both obvious and invisible. His mother’s declaration that he is still needed here on Earth has proven correct: His new mission is arguably much more important than any he performed in the warzone.

*To read about the impact Schlitz is having as an ambassador for the Gary Sinise Foundation, check the December issue of RI Magazine. To learn more about the Gary Sinise Foundation, visit [garysinisefoundation.org](http://garysinisefoundation.org).*



Schlitz with his mother Robbi outside of his new smart home, which is specially built for his limitations. All door knobs have been replaced with easy-to-pull levers. All light switches and shades can be operated by an iPad.



# YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Our experts tackle the burning questions on our readers' minds.

**Q:** *"Cardio on an empty stomach - will it really help me burn more fat?"*  
— Thomas F., via Facebook

Answer by [Sara Jane McShane](#), Fitness Author and Personal Trainer:

Fasted cardio and fat loss is a commonly debated topic in fitness. Some believe fasted cardio is more effective at burning fat, while others believe it can actually decrease performance and limit fat loss long-term. Which one is correct? Here's a look at both sides of this hotly-debated topic.

### Fasted Cardio

This fat-loss method was first hypothesized to be successful because without food readily available for energy, your body would turn to its fat stores as the energy for your workout. This method is seen by its proponents as a quicker way to drop a few unwanted pounds and a great way to meet a goal. However, the research has cast doubt on this theory. Studies have demonstrated that fasted cardio does not increase fat burning over a 24-hour period as opposed to consuming milk before exercise. That is not to say that milk is the best pre-workout, but rather that some carbs before your workout may help you burn more calories throughout the day.



Should you take your morning run on an empty stomach? It turns out that the frequency, duration, and intensity of your workout are all more important factors to consider.

# ASK US ANYTHING



If you worry about whether to eat before or after your workout, you're probably worrying about the wrong thing. An overall balanced diet is a more important factor than meal timing.

## Unfasted Cardio

There are several studies to draw from; the aforementioned milk study used milk glucose to test “unfasted” cardio. Ten males were used as the subjects and all of the results concluded that unfasted cardio actually helped these individuals burn more fat than fasted cardio. Again, this is not to say that milk is the answer to weight loss, but research shows that consuming calories consistently can actually help utilize our energy stores better. This, in turn, can aid fat loss.

## The Verdict

The majority of data available concludes that fasted cardio does not, in fact, offer additional benefits, and in some cases can actually hinder results. However, there are a lot of individuals—many of them elite bodybuilders and other athletes—who have reported great success with fasted cardio over the years. But as with many aspects of fitness, there is no one-size-fits-all answer. There is a very wide range of what is normal, and what might work for somebody else, particularly an elite athlete, might not work for you.

Through my experience, I would say to avoid fasted cardio unless having any kind of food in your belly makes you nauseous when you train. I have observed that the best way to ensure you are burning fat is through HIIT (high intensity interval training) to ensure your metabolism stays elevated for longer periods of time, while regulating your nutrition. The key number to remember 3,500. As in, there are 3,500 calories to one pound of fat. Burning an extra 500 calories more than you eat per day will help you burn one pound of fat per week. Total calories consumed versus total calories expended is what ultimately determines success or failure. The timing of when you eat is of secondary importance.



# ASK US ANYTHING

## COLD WEATHER HYDRATION

**Q:** *In the gym I don't sweat nearly as much during cold weather months as I do during warm weather months. I drink about a gallon of water a day during the summer. That means I can back off of how much water I drink until it warms up again, right?*

— Jack M., via Twitter

Answer by [Nathan Mikeska](#), owner of [N8 Wellness & Fitness](#):

You might be thirstier in the summer months, but it's just as important to stay hydrated in winter. The functions of water are very important, especially for people that exercise often. Water aids in our body's delivery and waste removal, maintain body temperature, serves as a source for sweat, helps lubricate joints, and cushions organs and tissue. We lose 60% of our bodies' water through urination at a non-exercise state, defecation, insensible processes (breathing), and 90% is lost in sweat during exercise. Remember that sweat output can change depending on the environment, intensity and duration of exercise, and size of the individual. Even though you are not sweating as much during the cool weather months, it's important to replenish water constantly.

Some advice: Monitor your body weight before and after exercise. If, following exercise, you lose a pound, you should always replace one pound of weight lost with 2 to 3 cups of water. Monitor the volume and color of your urine. Remember a small volume of dark colored urine means that you aren't drinking enough and you should start hydrating.

Adequate Intake: Adequate Intake for individuals 19 years of age or older is 2.7L (91 ounces) for women. Men should consume 3.7L (125 ounces). However, please remember that every individual is different based on age, activity level, climate, and daily activities. If you know that you normally go to the gym in the evening I recommend consuming as much as these recommendations throughout the day.

- Amount Consumed Before Exercise: 2-3 hours prior you should consume 17-20 ounces, or approximately one bottle of water. About 10-20 minutes prior, you should consume 7-10 ounces, or approximately one glass of water.

- Amount during Exercise: The main goal is to match sweat and urine output with fluid input. You need to be aware of how much you are losing (via sweat and urine) during workouts. The typical recommendation is 7-10 ounces every 10-20 minutes. This is most important for long-duration (>60 min) and high intensity exercise in a hot, humid environment.



Experts say you need to drink just as much water during cold-weather months as you do in the summer.



# SUGAR RUSH

High fructose corn syrup is trending down, but what's replacing it? The answer is more evidence that we need to get back to whole, natural foods.

By Heather Quinlan

In the 1980s, high fructose corn syrup made a ton of headlines in the press. Unlike today, all of the headlines back then were actually good. In this simpler time when less was known about processed foods and the dangers of sugar in general, HFCS was lauded for being a boon to the food industry because it was easy to produce and cheaper than real sugar. Food companies dumped it by the truckload into candy and soda, but they also put

it into all kinds of other common products from bread to condiments to spaghetti sauce. That was all OK, we were told, because the food industry was simultaneously pushing it as a healthier sugar alternative.

Yes, today's villain of all food villains, high fructose corn syrup, was once considered healthy. Fast forward to today: any food product bearing the label "NO high fructose corn syrup" is now considered the healthy option.

But by this point you should know that avoiding one particular kind of food or food additive doesn't automatically make you healthy. Most of us already learned this lesson during the low- and no-fat craze of the 90s.

For the purpose of this article, sugar refers to any and all of the following: sucrose, beet and cane sugar (either white or brown), high fructose corn syrup or HFCS, honey, sorbitol, xylitol, raw sugar, and



# KEEP IT SIMPLE

dextrose.

Most fitness enthusiasts avoid sugar of any kind unless it's consumed immediately after a rigorous workout, when it serves a purpose to restore depleted glycogen. These folks give it a very limited role in their diets, and to be sure, it should be limited in your diet, as well.

With that being said, there are studies that point to sugar being downright toxic for your health, and that it can be as addictive as cocaine. However, none of these studies can accurately say how much sugar it takes to become addictive or toxic.

Michael Pollan, author of the great book, *Food Rules*, famously wrote, "Don't eat anything your great-grandmother wouldn't recognize as food." That seems easy enough. But again, we've got a dilemma: Just because high fructose corn syrup is now public enemy number one, that doesn't mean the food industry has really changed its practices all that much. Sugar is once again sneaking into your diet and you may not even realize it. If those "healthier" options, so proud to tell you they don't contain HFCS, are just replacing it with another form of sugar, then we haven't made much progress, have we?

So what can you do? You don't have to go on a full blown sugar deprivation diet. Sugar derived from complex carbohydrates, especially fruits (which also contain necessary fiber) and milk, are sugar sources your body can really use. Sugar in your on-the-go breakfast bar, snack bar, and your lunch time

iced tea? Those are the pitfalls you need to avoid.

Take some time to read food labels. By converting grams to teaspoons—a much easier-to-understand visual reference for Americans—you can get a better grasp on how much sugar is really in some popular products. Remember that 4 grams of sugar equals 1 teaspoon.

Here's a look at some popular beverages:

Harmless Harvest Coconut Water: 3.75 teaspoons of sugar per 8.75 fl. oz serving

Starbucks Bottled Frappuccino: 8 teaspoons per 9.5 fl. oz serving

Vitamin Water: 4 teaspoons per 10 oz. serving

Coca-Cola: 7 teaspoons per 8 fl oz serving (a can is 12 oz.)

Snapple Iced Tea: 4.5 teaspoons per 8 fl oz serving (a bottle is 16 oz.)

See what's going on with the serving sizes? There are multiple servings in a non-re-sealable can of Coke. If you grab a 20 oz. bottle, that's 14 teaspoons of sugar. If you were at home, would you ever pour yourself a drink and then add 14 teaspoons of sugar to it?

"Healthy" snack bars are also hiding a ton of sugar. Here's a look at some popular ones:

Larabar: 4.5 teaspoons per 48g bar

Zone Perfect Bar: 3.75 teaspoons per 50g bar

Cliff Energy Bar: 5.5 teaspoons per 68g bar

For reference, here are two popular candies:

Kit Kat Bar: 5.25 teaspoons per 4-piece bar

Snickers Fun Size: 6.75 teaspoons per mini bar

By contrast, a medium sized apple contains about 18 g of sugar, or 4.5 tsp. But it's also loaded with fiber, vitamins and minerals—all of which are components that help you metabolize the sugar differently and make it a better energy source for your body.

Remember: You always have an opportunity to make better choices. Every time you make a purchase at the grocery store, you're voting with your dollars. Use those dollars to let food companies know that you won't be fooled into buying candy in a healthy-looking wrapper and you won't fall prey to trending buzzwords. You'll be standing up for your health and forcing the food industry to start moving in the right direction.

*Heather Quinlan is a certified Bikram Yoga instructor and health coach. Visit her website at: [hquinlan.com](http://hquinlan.com) and like her page on Facebook.*



Looks healthy, but if it's glued together with tapioca syrup, is that really so much better than high fructose corn syrup?

# JUST FOR 'KICKS

Now you'll see a familiar name in Walmarts everywhere.

What's Robert up to this month? Aside from a seven days of filming at the Burbank Studios to capture 21 new episodes of *The Robert Irvine Show*, quite a bit! Here's the rundown:

## NEW FITCRUNCH BAR

A brand new flavor of FitCrunch bar, Cinnamon Twist, makes its debut only at GNC on November 7. Robert developed this new flavor just for the fall, so it's available only for a limited time. Get them while supplies last. Buy online at [GNC.com](http://GNC.com).

## RI LIVE

This month, Robert Irvine Live rolls through Manhattan, KS on November 17 and through Tulsa, OK the next day. Check [HERE](#) for tickets. What is RI Live? It's not a cooking demo and it's not scripted. In short, it showcases Robert's gift for improvisation. You'll see him enter the theater with no idea of what he is about to face, and then cook his way through a series of audience-generated challenges. And if you've got a ticket, you should be prepared to get onstage yourself.

## SIDEKICKS

Robert's Signature Sidekicks are now available in Walmarts throughout the US. Sidekicks are fresh, healthy, and flavorful sides that prepare in 10 minutes or less—



no chopping required—and are available in four varieties: Garlic Balsamic Broccoli, Provencal Ratatouille, Sesame Ginger Stir-Fry, and Braised Collard Greens. Try them out and take a picture of yourself with the package to be featured on Robert's Facebook page. [E-mail](#) it to us with the subject line, #SideKickSelfie

## MIAMI HOMESTEAD

On November 19 and 20, Robert will be at Miami Homestead Speedway with corporate partner Comcast for the Ford EcoBoost 400.

## ON THE ROAD AGAIN

At the end of the month, Robert returns to tour with the USO; he'll be in the Middle East entertaining our troops from November 27 through December 5.



At top, take your #SideKickSelfie and send it to us. Bottom, 21 new episodes of *The Robert Irvine Show* will film this month.



# WORDS TO LIVE BY

*“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.”*

— John F. Kennedy

*“Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has plenty; not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.”*

— Charles Dickens

*“This a wonderful day. I’ve never seen this one before.”*

— Maya Angelou

*“Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude.”*

— A.A. Milne, from *Winnie-the-Pooh*

*“When I started counting my blessings, my whole life turned around.”*

— Willie Nelson