

healthy

MIAMI

THE IMPORTANCE
OF PHYSICAL
FITNESS
IN CHILDREN

PAIN &
SLEEP:
WHAT IS
FIBROMYALGIA?

FASHION
AND HEALTH:
RESISTING
THE ALLURE
OF A TAN

A WOMAN'S
WELL-BEING:
*a Mind-Body-Spirit
Approach*

THE CHEF GETS HEALTHY

ERIC STEIN PROVES
CLEAN EATING CAN BE FUN



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ERIC STEIN PROVES CLEAN EATING CAN BE FUN

Chef Eric Stein has dedicated his life to building a repertoire of gourmet cuisine for which your body will thank you. He takes inspiration from all around Latin America, specifically his home country of Peru, and infuses it with techniques and ingredients he picked up from his time spent both in culinary school and traveling the world.



THE CHEF GETS HEALTHY

1. TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELF.

I was born in Peru, and both my parents were. I always loved being around food; I remember watching my grandfather get into the kitchen and fix us his "specialty" – I didn't remember much about my grandmother, but everyone tells me she was a great professional and passionate cook; I guess I carry that passion in my DNA.

I was born in a time and place where "being a cook" was not a thing; it was not considered a respectable career so, understandably, I ended up being a systems engineer. And I'm not trying to brag, but I was a pretty good one; something was missing, though. I used to always joke about it, saying that one day, I was going to leave everything for cooking. I guess it wasn't a joke after all, because eventually, out of the blue, I did! I quit my job, broke the piggy bank and enrolled myself in cooking school – crazy times.

2. WHAT MADE YOU START COOKING? CAN YOU RELATE YOUR FIRST FOOD MEMORY?

I was always a picky eater. I would only eat food that I knew what was in it. That's why I was constantly sneaking into the kitchen early in the morning.

I know this sounds dangerous, but by the time I was six years

old, I was already sneaking into the kitchen around supper time and deep frying stuff – you know, nuggets, hot dogs, fries, etc. There was no microwave oven back then. My mom had three jobs back when my sister and I were kids, so even though I was the youngest one, I was the one reheating food for dinner, and with no microwave, that meant using the stove. Of course, I would add stuff to the food that I thought would make it better, but I was a kid, so mostly that meant sugar, salt, and an occasional spice. For the record and full disclosure, I did not always succeed.

3. WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO COME TO MIAMI?

Easy question! Opportunity. I've always been fascinated by the diversification of culture, especially through food. This gave me the drive to travel everywhere I could, from different parts of Peru to tiny towns in Hungary and Poland.

One day, I was offered the opportunity to come to Florida, and, without thinking about it twice, I took it. Of course, at the time, making Miami my home wasn't even a remote idea. Later, I learned that a couple of years in Miami would teach a person more about diversity and culture than many years of traveling the world would.

4. WHAT PRINCIPLES DO YOU USUALLY FOLLOW WHEN MAKING "HEALTHY GOURMET" FOOD?

I could easily talk about technicalities, micronutrients and macronutrients, but let's be real... The most important principle of all is that it has to taste and look good. There would be no gain on making the healthiest and most nutritious dish ever if no one were to eat it. After understanding this, one can see that it's easy: use fresh ingredients, avoid by-products, avoid artificial sweeteners, and load up on antioxidants, fiber, and healthy fats. You know, the basics....

5. WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO START COOKING HEALTHY FOOD IN THE FIRST PLACE?

If I have to be completely honest, it was my weight issues and the struggle that came with them. Look, I love food. I love to cook it, and obviously, I love to eat it. Being a chef, I know that the whole situation is a little bit trickier. Most people get hungry late at night and have a snack. We come down to the kitchen, and we have a whole meal just because we can.

6. DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR HOME COOKS LOOKING TO LIVE HEALTHIER LIFESTYLES?

Knowing how to cook even to the most basic level is a significant advantage. Just the understanding of certain techniques can make the difference between having a good healthy meal and never trying to cook again.

I would suggest keeping a "clean" fridge and pantry. I'm not saying, don't ever have a pizza, all I'm saying is don't have it at home. Keeping my home free of frozen junk food and sugar loaded drinks was a key to my initial success.

7. WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE DISHES?

Now, that's a tricky question. And it may sound odd coming from a professionally trained chef, but for me, there are only a few things that can beat a good fried egg over steamed white rice.

8. DO YOU HAVE ANYONE YOU LOOK UP TO IN YOUR FIELD? WHAT MAKES THEM SO INSPIRING YOU?

Well, besides the obvious answer being Chef Gaston Acurio, who basically put Peruvian cuisine on the map, I look up to many people

and not only those in my direct field. I admire chefs like Thomas Keller, Jamie Oliver, and Ferran Adrià and entrepreneurs like Steve Jobs, Jeff Bezos, and Mark Zuckerberg. They all have something in common. They had a vision and did not stop working until they had achieved it.

9. WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR ASPIRATIONS? WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN TEN OR TWENTY YEARS?

It may sound like a cliché, but I really want to make a difference in the long run. Not only for people looking to change their lifestyles but for everyone, from the home cook to the professional chef; from the stay-at-home parent to the busy professional running around the city. I know it's a long shot and will take every ounce of me, but I honestly believe that it can be done.

10. WHAT DO YOU ENJOY DOING ON YOUR TIME OFF?

I'm a simple guy, and simple things make my day. I enjoy hanging out with my wife and kids, cooking with my three-year-old son, doing martial arts, and lately, growing herbs and vegetables in my garden.

By Andres Portillo

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