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DIABETES

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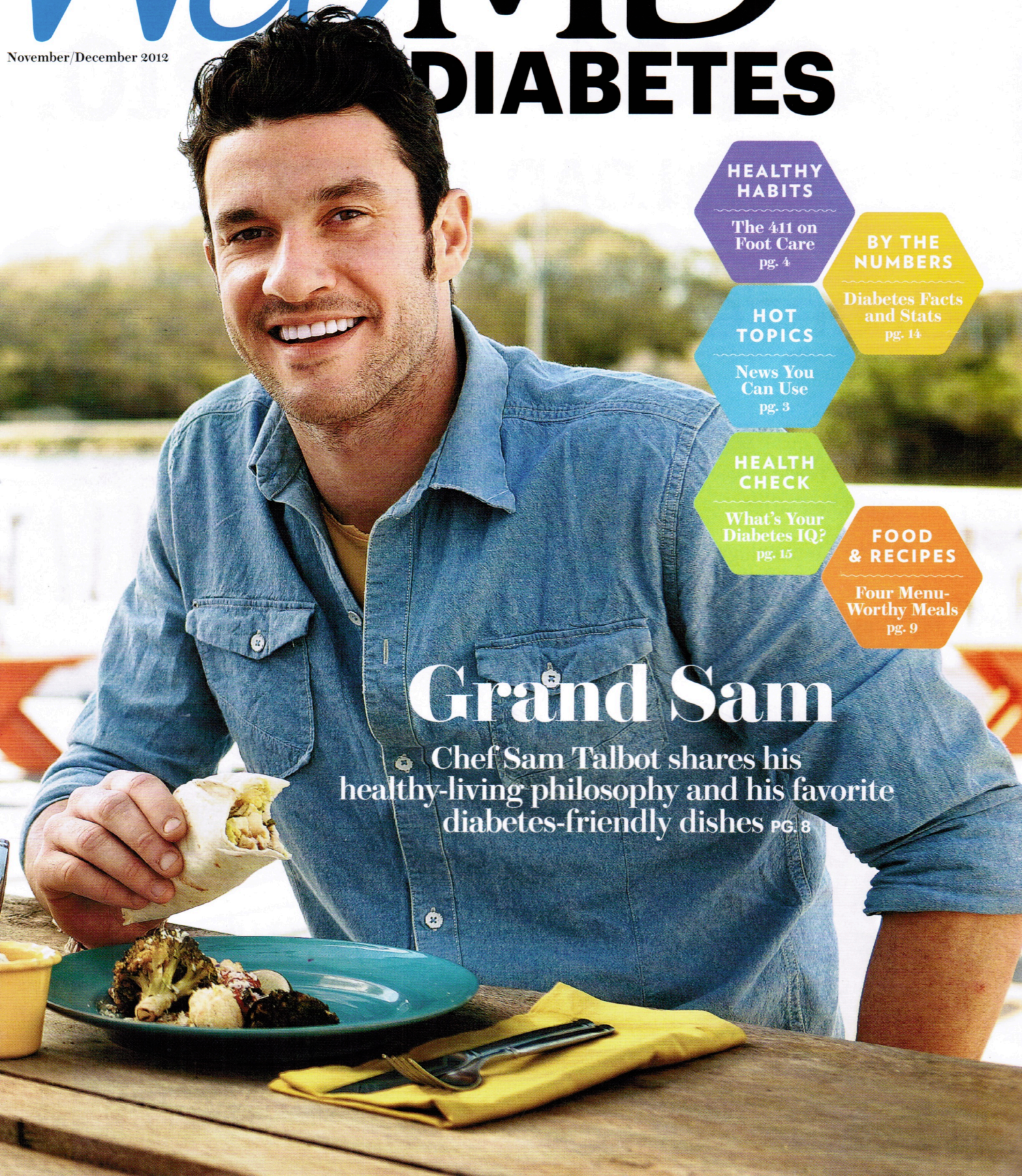
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Grand Sam

Chef Sam Talbot shares his
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Kitchen

CONFIDENTIAL

Sam Talbot, runner-up and fan favorite from season two of Bravo's *Top Chef*, is former executive chef of Imperial No. Nine in New York's Mondrian SoHo hotel and the Surf Lodge in Montauk, N.Y. Talbot, 34, also lives with type 1 diabetes. In his cookbook *The Sweet Life*, published last year, he shares his personal health and wellness philosophy, as well as some of his favorite diabetes-friendly recipes. Here he dishes even more about how he stays healthy.

BY ERIN O'DONNELL

RECIPE PHOTOGRAPHS BY
TARA DONNE/RODALE

What's your approach to cooking and food?

I'm a big fan of taking food that we know and love and making it a little more modern and a lot healthier. It's simple, farm-fresh, ocean-fresh food that's seasonal and heart-healthy.

How did diabetes shape your philosophy as a chef?

I was diagnosed at such a young age, when I was 12. I was already messing around in the kitchen, and it really taught me the connection between food and how you feel. I would eat a bowl of cereal or make mashed potatoes and then measure my blood sugar three hours later. It would go through the roof sometimes, but that's part of learning what certain foods do to your body.

What's your go-to weeknight dinner?

I go to the farmers market or walk through the grocery store and see what's the freshest and looks the greenest and most vibrant. I do a lot of quick vegetable sautés with shirataki noodles and broth. That's kind of my go-to dish.

What are your other pantry staples?

Almond milk and chili paste. I don't eat dairy for the most part because of the fat and calories, and almond milk is a really great swap-out. You get all these heart-healthy antioxidants and nutrients that your body needs to feel nourished. Chili paste really elevates a dish, wakes it up. I'll throw it into vinaigrettes, or I'll use it to flavor broths.



Shirataki Noodles with Cashews and Chilies

This fast, satisfying dish features shirataki noodles, a low-carb pasta made from konjac, an Asian yam, and sambal oelek chili paste, an Indonesian specialty. Find both ingredients in Asian grocery stores and natural food stores.

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients

- 2 packages (16 oz total) shirataki noodles
- 3 tbsp toasted sesame oil
- 1 large red onion, diced
- 4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp finely chopped fresh ginger
- 2 fresh jalapeño chili peppers, seeded and finely chopped
- 2 tbsp sesame seeds, toasted in a dry skillet
- 2 tbsp rice vinegar
- 2 tbsp agave nectar
- 1 tsp sambal oelek chili paste
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- ¼ cup chopped cashews
- ½ cup hand-torn fresh cilantro
- 2 tbsp low-sodium soy sauce

Directions

1. Rinse the noodles under cold running water and drain well, then transfer them to a large bowl and toss with 1 tbsp of the sesame oil to prevent sticking.
2. In a large skillet, heat the remaining 2 tbsp sesame oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion, garlic, ginger, jalapeños, and sesame seeds and cook, stirring frequently, until the onions are translucent and aromatic, 2–3 minutes.
3. Add the rice vinegar, agave nectar, and chili paste, stirring well to combine. Mix in the broth, cashews, cilantro, and soy sauce. Cook for 1–2 minutes to marry the flavors.
4. Pour the sauce over the noodles. Let the noodles rest in the sauce for a few minutes before serving.

Per serving

227 calories, 4 g protein, 19 g carbohydrate, 16 g fat (2 g saturated fat), 0 mg cholesterol, 2 g fiber, 7.5 g sugar, 448 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 63%

What are your go-to healthy snacks?

I eat the coconut acai granola that's in my cookbook all the time. And I eat kale chips all the time. I'm in the car a lot, and I don't like stopping for fast food or gas station food, so I bring those things.

What's your best health habit? Your worst?

I think a shot of wheatgrass every day is my best health habit. It's a little funky at first. It tastes like grass. But once you join that bandwagon, you start to feel great. You get so many nutrients from just that 1-ounce shot. My worst health habit? I'm a sucker for french fries.

In restaurant kitchens, you must face all sorts of foods that aren't diabetes-friendly. How do you deal?

Moderation. My pastry chef at the Mondrian liked sugar. And his pastries and desserts were really wonderful. I had to try them as the executive chef, and I would take a bite. But the temptation of walking by a bowl of french fries? I have to fight



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CHRISTOPHER TESTANI

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tooth and nail not to eat them. At the Surf Lodge, there were fries flying out of the kitchen all day long. You just have to talk yourself through it.

You split your time between New York City and Montauk. What's your workout regimen like?

I usually work out every day. At home, I do a lot of pull-ups and sit-ups, and I do yoga. I work out at the gym with free weights. I also do two miles on the elliptical machine every day. And then when I'm in Montauk, I surf.

What's the hardest part of your fitness routine?

I'm absolutely terrified of the ocean. But I force myself to get in the water. I like that quote, "Do one thing every day that scares you." You feel more enriched or enlightened. There's always a moment of sheer terror before I go in, but I get out there, and I surf and I swim, and I do what I need to do to stay healthy and fit.

When you're stressed out, what do you do to reset?

I go outside and look at both of my feet on the ground and take big, deep breaths. I just focus for a minute and realize that I'm not curing cancer, I'm not curing diabetes, I'm just cooking. I take five, 10 deep breaths, and then I go back in and attack the things on my checklist one by one. My exercise

Reviewed by **Louise Chang, MD**, WebMD Senior Medical Editor

Grilled Strip Loin With Carrot-Ginger Vinaigrette

This special-occasion dish pairs a kicky carrot vinaigrette with juicy steak, a combination that tastes "absolutely wonderful," Talbot says.

Makes 6 servings

Ingredients

Carrot-Ginger Vinaigrette

- 1 cup roasted garlic oil
- 3 carrots, finely diced
- 3 tbsp grated ginger
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 large yellow onion, finely diced
- ½ cup red wine vinegar
- 3 tbsp agave nectar
- 2 tbsp sambal oelek chili paste
- 2 tbsp reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- ½ tsp sea salt
- fresh ground black pepper to taste

Steak

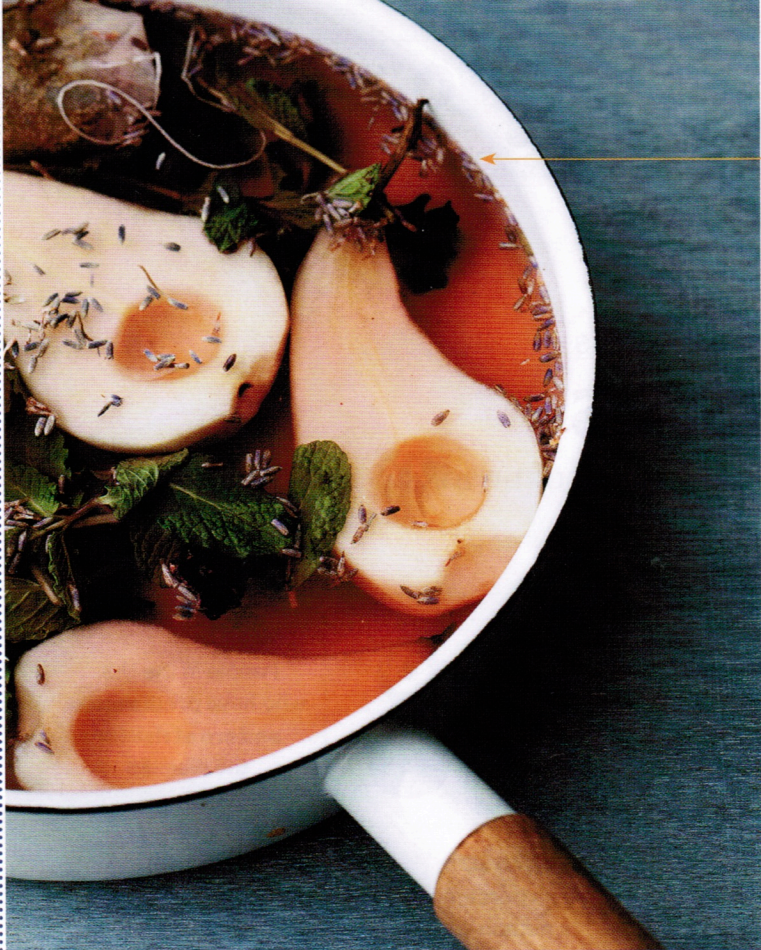
- 3 tbsp roasted garlic oil
- 3 tbsp chopped fresh rosemary
- 4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 shallot, finely diced
- 2 tbsp red wine vinegar
- 2 (12-oz) strip loin steaks
- ¼ tsp sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Directions

1. In a medium skillet, heat 2 tbsp garlic oil over medium-high heat. Add the carrots, ginger, and garlic, and cook until the carrots are fork-tender, 2–3 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.
2. In a food processor or blender, combine the onion, vinegar, agave nectar, chili paste, soy sauce, mustard, salt, and pepper. Blend the mixture until smooth, gradually adding the remaining ¾ cup plus 2 tbsp garlic oil in a slow stream. Transfer the mixture to a small bowl and fold in the carrot-ginger mixture. Set aside.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together the oil, rosemary, chopped garlic, shallot, and vinegar. Add the steaks, turning to coat well with the marinade, then set the bowl aside to rest at room temperature for 10 minutes.
4. Preheat an outdoor grill or a stovetop grill pan to medium-high heat. Grill the steaks without turning for 2 minutes. Rotate them 45 degrees and cook another 2 minutes. Flip them over and repeat. Cook a total of 4 minutes per side for medium-rare.
5. Transfer the cooked steaks to a cutting board and season with salt and pepper. Let the steaks rest 3–4 minutes before thinly slicing them against the grain. Top with 2 tbsp of vinaigrette.

Per serving

344 calories, 23 g protein, 1 g carbohydrate, 26 g fat (8 g saturated fat), 64 mg cholesterol, 179 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 69%



Lavender Poached Pears

Talbot loves the aroma of the lavender and mint in this healthy dessert. Instead of sugar, he uses stevia, a plant-based sweetener available in large supermarkets and natural food stores. Talbot usually uses Bosc pears, but you can try any variety in season.

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients

- 2 large ripe Bosc pears, slightly firm to the touch
- 3 cups water
- 3 tbsp granulated stevia extract, or to taste
- 1 tbsp dried lavender
- 2 blossoms dried hibiscus
- 1 chamomile tea bag
- ½ cup loosely packed fresh mint leaves

Directions

1. Peel, halve, and core the pears using a melon baller to scoop out the seeds.
2. In a large pot, combine 3 cups water, stevia, lavender, hibiscus, chamomile tea, and mint. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, and then reduce the heat to medium-low, add the pears, and simmer until you can easily pierce the pears with the tip of a knife, about 20 minutes.
3. To serve, transfer the pear halves to 4 individual bowls and ladle some of the cooking liquid over the top.

Per serving

79 calories, 1 g protein, 20 g carbohydrate, 0 g total fat (0 g saturated fat), 0 mg cholesterol, 5 g fiber, 11 g sugar, 10 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 0%

“I’m a big fan of taking food that we know and love and making it more modern.”

routine helps, too. On the days when I don’t exercise, I start to come undone.

You travel a lot. How do you stay healthy on the road?

I do a lot of planning. I don’t want to be in a bind where I have to eat potato chips or a gas station hot dog. If I’m flying, the night before I’ll make a batch of granola and other stuff that travels well that I can have on the plane.

How do you cope with holiday parties?

I try to eat at my house before I go. I’ll do some kind of guacamole or something that’s going to sustain me. I try to go in fortified so I eat smaller portions at the party. I drink wine sometimes, but only with food. I usually drink vodka with club soda and fresh lemon, so it’s fewer calories and carbs. And for every drink that I have, I’ll drink a glass of water.

What are you cooking for the holidays?

I love to braise turkeys. I take a whole turkey and break it down into parts, sear them in a pan, and then braise them with tomatoes and garlic and ginger. I serve it over brown rice with flaxseed or chia seed mixed in. It smells good, it’s healthy, and that means everyone’s feeling good.

Warm Mango With Chili Agave

This dessert recipe offers a pleasing array of tastes, colors, and textures. It features agave nectar, a sweet syrup derived from the same plant used to make tequila.

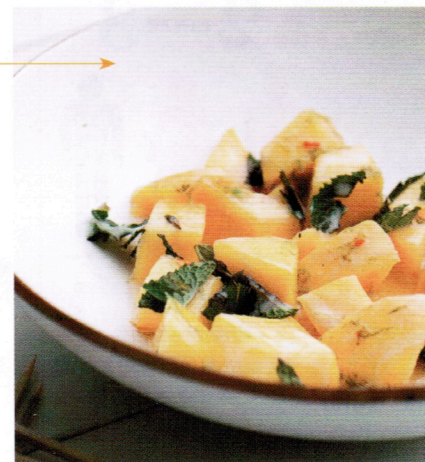
Makes 8 servings

Ingredients

- grated zest and juice of 3 limes
- 2 tbsp agave nectar
- ½ tsp sambal oelek chili paste
- ¼ cup water
- 1 tbsp unsalted butter
- 3 mangoes, peeled and diced
- ¼ cup coconut milk
- ¼ cup loosely packed, hand-torn fresh mint leaves

Directions

1. First, make the chili honey: In a blender, combine the lime zest and juice, agave nectar, chili paste, and water. Blend on a low setting until smooth.
2. In a large skillet, melt the butter over medium-high



heat. When the butter begins to bubble, add the mangoes and cook without stirring for 30 seconds. Stir in the coconut milk and mint.

3. Transfer the mango mixture to a serving platter. Serve with the chili honey drizzled over the top.

Per serving

90 calories, 1 g protein, 17 g carbohydrate, 3 g fat (2 g saturated fat), 4 mg cholesterol, 2 g fiber, 13 g sugar, 9 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 31%