

best body



Get Carried Away!

In the eight years since appearing on *American Idol*, Carrie Underwood has transformed more than her career: The superstar singer has a hotter bod, a healthier appetite, and a happier life.

By Hannah Morrill

FASHION DIRECTOR: JACQUELINE AZRIA, HAIR: CHRISTIAN MARC FOR CHARLES WORTHINGTON/THE MAGNET AGENCY, MAKEUP: JEANNIA ROBINETTE/STARWORKS ARTISTS, MANICURE: ANASTASIA KRAJECKI/ESCAPE DAT SALON, MICHAEL MICHAEL KORS TANK, SWIV JEANS, MICHAEL STARS HAT, AVIVA ROSE JEWELRY NECKLACE, JAMIE JOSEPH BRACELET (SHOWN ON LAST PAGE), UNDERWOOD'S OWN RING

Carrie Underwood is what you might call an accidental superstar. Back in 2004, while the rest of country's aspiring singers were shilling demo tapes and crooning in empty bars, Carrie was a journalism student and sorority girl at Oklahoma's Northeastern State University. "I would go to a party, sit on the couch, and watch," she says of her college days. "I'm not good in crowds. I like to blend."

So clearly, she didn't seek the spotlight. She also didn't write music. Or diet. And she certainly didn't work out. After all, in her hometown of Checotah, Oklahoma—the self-proclaimed steer-wrestling capital of the world—there wasn't even a gym.

But what she did possess was a pitch-perfect, soul-stirring, don't-even-think-about-messing-with-me voice that got her crowned the winner of American Idol's season four.

Carrie faced the prospect of stadium performances, snarky reporters, and celeb-soaked events with the doggedness she used in college: "I'm not a procrastinator. I want to feel prepared and just get it done."

Only now, preparedness means something new—rigorous workouts, a strict diet,

and an untold number of personal sacrifices. In fact, she considers it her "job" to stay healthy and ready for new experiences. It's all this—six Grammys, eight Billboard Music Awards, five CMA awards, and four platinum albums later—that keeps her on top. Here, the country superstar, 30, spills her life-transforming strategies.

Fitness

Exercise Your Way

Since winning *Idol*, Carrie has noticeably slimmed down. "I'm not embarrassed [by old pictures] because there was a lot I didn't know," she says. Like one damn thing about getting in shape. So she hired a trainer, who tours with her. The two work out—a blend of strength training and heart-pounding cardio—nearly every day for an hour and a half, even when Carrie's scheduled to perform. "On the road, there's not a whole lot to do," she says. But when she's home, she'll take her workouts down to four days a week. "You can't go at breakneck speed all the time."

Learn to Improvise

On her *Blown Away* tour, which wrapped in May, Carrie played 112 shows, some in big cities and others in... lesser-known places (Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada, anyone?). Needless to say, the training facilities weren't always state-of-the-art. When Carrie is somewhere sans good



Roll to Sculpt

When she's not exercising with a trainer, to save workouts from monotony Carrie plays games—using dice. To let the good times—and calorie burning—roll: Pick six of the exercises below. Assign to numbers of one die. Do each move 15 times (except the jog), resting 10 seconds between sets. Carrie rolls the die 25 times (can you say "workout fiend"?).

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Squats | Pushups |
| Lunges | Half-Mile Jog |
| Crunches | Curls |
| Bicycle Crunches | Burpees |
| | Frog Jumps |

equipment, "we box, we do body-weight exercises. If they have trails, we'll go for a run."

Time the Tough Stuff

Tabata, a form of high-intensity interval training, is Carrie's latest discovery. You perform a 20-seconds-on, 10-seconds-off sequence of moves for eight rounds, or four total minutes. Carrie does a single exercise targeting one zone (arms, legs, core) for all the rounds. "When I do pushups, I'm dropping to my knees halfway through," she says. "When I do abs, it hurts. But I like it. It makes me work."

Nutrition

Eat with Purpose

Vegetarian for years and now primarily vegan, Carrie's in it for health—"you cut out a lot of fried stuff!"—but she's also an animal lover. (In 2011, she took an injured stray dog to the vet and then helped find it a safe home.) A fave poultry substitute: the meatless "chicken" from the brand Yves. "A lot of my food has air bunnies around it," she says, creating air quotes with her fingers.



From left: Performing at the 2013 CMA Music Festival in Nashville this June; a pic she posted of her dogs on Twitter; with her husband, hockey star Mike Fisher, at last year's American Music Awards



Carrie refers to her pups as "the kids."



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: ALAMY; JON KOPALOFF/FILMMAGIC; COURTESY OF CARRIE UNDERWOOD; FREDERICK BREEDON IV/WIREIMAGE. THIS SPREAD: DEAR CASHMERE SWEATER; ISABEL MARANT SKIRT; ETRO CUFF



PLAYING FAVORITES

A list of things Carrie would rather not live without:

COCONUT OIL “I put it on my food, I put it on my face, I put it on my hair. If it’s winter, the second I get out of the shower, I spread it all over and it feels really good and it smells good too.”

EZEKIEL BREAD “It’s not like white sandwich bread. It has grains like barley. Once you get used to it, you can’t go back.”

BETTER’N PEANUT BUTTER “I’m not a big sweets person, but sometimes I’ll do apples with peanut butter. This peanut butter has only 100 calories and two grams of fat.”

HOSTING THE COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION AWARDS WITH BRAD PAISLEY At first Carrie thought, “*They want us to host? How do we host?*” Now, in our sixth year, I feel like we know what we’re doing and it’s just fun.”

HOT YOGA—THE RELAXED WAY “I go to a place in Nashville when I’m home, but I had to talk with the instructor. She would always try to really push me, so I was like, ‘This is my stretchy time. I’m here to relax and stretch out all the stuff that I’ve done to myself over the week. I don’t want to be pushed.’”

HER OLD GYM SHORTS “I’ve had the same shorts for years and I’ll wear them until I can’t wear them anymore. People who dress up for the gym? I don’t like them.”



A FLAIR FOR HAIR

After priming her strands for hundreds of shows, Carrie has the quick-style down to a science. Her time-saving glam squad:

Pink Pewter headbands Carrie loves the thin gold bands she buys at Parlour 3, her salon near Nashville. "Put one on and start tucking your hair up into the back. It will look supercute."

Dry shampoo "It changed my life. If you haven't colored your hair in awhile, spray right in your part, and it can really take the edge off."

Bobby pins "I've gotten better at updos: Sometimes it's all about piling your hair up the way you want it and then just pinning."

CHI flatiron "I'll never forget the day my red-carpet hair person used a flatiron to *curl* my hair. You take a section and start twisting. You have to have a flatiron that's really smooth."

Be a Diligent Diarist

Most songwriters carry notebooks filled with jotted lyrics. In Carrie's striped one, you'll find an impeccably recorded food journal. "It's the most important thing in my arsenal," she says. "[Most people's] stomachs say, 'Hey, I'm full, stop sending food down!' Mine doesn't do that." The journal helps her make informed decisions.

Mood Boosters

Stay Grounded

Most stars employ full-time hair and makeup pros—and who wouldn't? Well, Carrie. "I've always loved makeup," she says. Before every show, she layers on her own foundation, smokes out her own eyes (she likes shimmery gold and brown shadows), styles her own hair, and clips in her own hair extensions.

Bring "Family" Along

You won't find Carrie on tour without her dogs, Penny and Ace. "Having that connection on tour is really important. Everybody's all worried about me all the time. They're my thing to take care of."

Throw a Party

Does she like sleeping on a bus, missing dinners with fellow hockey wives back in Nashville (Carrie's hub is NHL player Mike Fisher), and communicating with family via Skype? Not so much. When things start dragging on tour, Carrie pulls the crew together for parking-lot parties. "We get some beers, grill out, and don't worry about anything."

Get Uncomfortable

On December 5, Carrie will play Maria in a live version of *The Sound of Music* on NBC. "The live thing? It's gutsy. It's ambitious," she says. The only part that has her a little nervous? The acting. "Music is where I live. But doing other things broadens me and my experiences and what I can do. I'm up for anything." ■

Cook Up a Storm

If you're a vegetarian, things can get pretty sad at the on-set catering tables. Carrie's seen her share of eggplant parmesan, which is all well and good—if you like eggplant. (Carrie doesn't.) She now shops for and prepares her own food—tofu scrambles, veggie burgers—on the double-burner she had installed in her tour bus.

Because she's often short on time, Carrie travels with Dr. McDougall's boxed pad thai and lentil pilaf, which require only water and a microwave. She also stocks Vitaminwater (she's a spokesperson) for hydration.