

HEALTHY WAYS TO FIRE UP THE GRILL PAGE 36

# Good Health

SUMMER 2015

LIFESTYLES

## CARRIE ANN INABA

The DWTS judge dishes about self-care, battling joint pain, and the joy of animals

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# Carrie Ann Inaba

*Choreographing a more balanced life*

by Kim Henderson



PHOTOGRAPHY BY KWAKU ALSTON

Most of us know her as one of the four judges on ABC's Emmy Award-winning, primetime reality TV series *Dancing With the Stars*. Yet, that is only one facet of the dynamic and brave Carrie Ann Inaba. She's a successful dancer, choreographer, actress, producer, and philanthropist. As one of the original "Fly Girls" in the 1990s breakout sketch comedy series

*In Living Color* and a featured dancer in Madonna's *Girlie Show World Tour*, Carrie Ann has broken barriers for Asian women in entertainment. But she has also successfully faced several health challenges. At a new chapter in her life, Carrie Ann shares her thoughts on healthy living, animal love, and the beauty of slowing down and enjoying the moment.

## HEALTH BASICS

**GHL:** What's your daily "wellness" routine?

**CAI:** I do a 30-minute yoga session in the morning before I go anywhere. I also drink lemon water first thing to keep my body's pH balance more on the alkaline side. Then when I have my coffee, I don't feel so guilty about it! After my morning's work, I usually come home to refuel and spend time with my five animals—three dogs and two cats. I take all the animals outside and lay out a towel. And I get in the sun, enjoy the fresh air, and relax out there for at least 15 minutes. I wouldn't say that I'm meditating, although I find it to be very restorative—I get to smell the grass, see the leaves, hear the birds, and feel the breeze. Spending time in nature always grounds me.

**GHL:** What are your health challenges?

**CAI:** I have a condition called Sjögren's (pronounced Show-grin's) Syndrome, which is an autoimmune condition where the immune system attacks the moisture-producing glands in the body. I tend to have a dry mouth and eyes. For this reason, I eat lots of watery fruits and vegetables. I usually eat a salad for lunch. My favorite is tuna and arugula with balsamic or lemon juice and olive oil. I find the simpler I eat, the better I feel.

I also have rheumatoid arthritis (RA). I had been a Type A personality—really a Triple A—going after all my dreams! But I was going too hard, pushing myself as many of us do and then trying to balance my personal life with my career. The pain of RA taught me that I needed to slow down. Then Sjögren's slowed me down even more. Both health crises gave me the gift of learning how to really listen to my own body. Now I know that I have to take a break during the day. And I welcome it.

I've also learned that, even as an independent contractor in a business where I continually need to secure my

next job, sometimes I have to say no to take care of myself. It takes a lot of trust and a lot of courage. It's actually quite scary to do!

**GHL:** What's your go-to exercise for staying fit and healthy?

**CAI:** Yoga. I love doing sun salutations. To me, it does everything. You get in touch with your breath. It almost feels like a dance routine to me. It includes roughly eight moves that put me into a moving meditation. It is something I can do anywhere, anytime. If I'm traveling, I don't need music. I don't need anything. It's very user-friendly!

**GHL:** What's your daily supplement regimen?

**CAI:** I take **Vitamin D** because I had a big deficiency. I also take an iron supplement because I have had low ferritin levels—this is something all women should check. It's important to have your blood work done.

I take **omega-3s**, and I will take them for my entire life! It's good for my RA—and it actually helps with everything.

I also take **curcumin**. It's really good for fighting inflammation. It helps me a lot when I have a flare-up with the arthritis and especially with pain. Yet, it's not an instant pain reliever. You have to create a regimen and, like all good things, it takes time. You have to keep it in your body.

When I'm sluggish or have sore muscles, I take **magnesium** supplements. I also use a magnesium gel that I put on my skin. It's great for athletes who are constantly overworking their muscles.

## CHALLENGES

**GHL:** You suffer from spinal stenosis, a narrowing of one or more areas of the spine that puts pressure on the nerves, causing pain. What have you done to address it?

## Carrie Ann Inaba's TOP FIVE TIPS for Health and Well-Being

1

### Spend Time with Animals

It is the most nourishing thing in the world to be with animals!

2

### Move Your Body

Stretch your body every day!  
A yoga routine is perfect.

3

### Get Outside!

Let the sun shine on your face, feel the breeze, and smell the flowers.

4

### Drink Water with Lemon First Thing

Drink a glass of water and lemon every morning. It's alkalizing.

5

### Take Supplements

Get your blood work done to find out what nutrients your body needs. Take the proper supplements since we don't always get what we need from our diets.

**CAI:** When I was first diagnosed, I experienced really severe pain. I went to the doctor and I was given steroid shots into my back. After I got the initial relief from the pain, I immediately started to find alternative ways to address the issue. I followed up with acupuncture and massage. And I did that every week after that. I've never gone back



Featured with her fellow *Dancing With the Stars* judges (left to right) Bruno Tonioli, Julianne Hough, Carrie Ann, and Len Goodman.

into that state of pain again. I also do cranial sacral work. It involves the lightest touching, and I can feel my body responding. Being an athlete, I didn't know! I thought everything had to be big and strong to be effective. Sometimes less is more; life doesn't have to be about forcing through everything.

## SPIRIT

**GHL:** You are a passionate animal rights advocate. The human-pet relationship can be healing. How does owning a pet enhance your well-being?

**CAI:** When you look into the eyes of an animal, it's just pure love. There's no ulterior motive. The essence of life is just so much clearer in an animal. It's untainted with all the bizarre desires we have as humans. Those moments

when I take my animals outside—when Buddy licks my face and lizards come out to sun themselves, or when one of my cats rolls on his back wanting to be petted—those are truly some of the most beautiful moments of my life.

**GHL:** Can you tell us about The Carrie Ann Inaba Animal Project Foundation?

**CAI:** I love animals and started the foundation basically to help other organizations that are already out there. We raise money and produce one event a year called the L.A. Spay/Neuter Festival. And with the funds that we raise, we offer free spay/neutering,

TO LEARN MORE about the Carrie Ann Animal Foundation, go to [www.caiap.org](http://www.caiap.org)

microchipping, and vaccination services to underserved communities. I'm very proud of it.

**GHL:** Finally, what is next for Carrie Ann?

**CAI:** In the next year, I'll be writing children's books. I've always wanted to share what I've learned through my varied experiences with children. I also bought the rights to a book, and I'm developing it into a television series. But mostly, I just intend to be taking more time for myself. I have a new love in my life. He really is my other half, and he makes me a better person. I will be spending a lot more time with him enjoying the moment. ■

**Kim Henderson** is a Los Angeles-based writer who specializes in health and environment.