

DEPARTURES



July/August 2013

AN AMERICAN SUMMER

featuring

*Michael Kors and **PALM SPRINGS** Style*

*The Secret Chic of **MILLBROOK, NY***

*A Wild Weekend in **VEGAS** with Four Superstar Chefs*

*Tour de France à la **TENNESSEE***

*Woody Allen Does **SAN FRANCISCO***

PERSONAL BEST

HOW TO LOOK GOOD, FEEL GREAT, STAY FIT • EDITED BY DEBORAH FRANK



Antonio Sersale, in sleek black workout gear, puts his all into an aerobics class.

WORKING OUT

LA DOLCE BOOT CAMP

For Italian hotelier Antonio Sersale, who flew from Positano to Malibu for a week of male bonding at the trendiest all-American spa of the moment, it also meant no vino, no pasta, no dolce.

finally gathered the courage to reserve my spot at **The Ranch at Live Oak/Malibu**—a no-options, tough-as-boot-camp fitness retreat founded in 2010 in the Santa Monica Mountains. It seems to be the spa that everyone talks about, from Dallas to Positano, where my wife, Carla, and I run the boutique hotel Le Sirenuse. Carla said no to joining me for

what I fear will be a week of intense suffering, so I enlisted my hotelier friends Aaron Kaupp from the Armani Hotel in Milan; Crescenzo Gargano, whose family owns the Hotel Santa Caterina in Amalfi; and Omer Acar of the Royal Monceau in Paris. The idea of going to The Ranch came to us last summer while we were at a travel show in Las Vegas, where we met the

owners, Alex and Sue Glasscock. Our intention was not really to lose weight but to detox, exercise and escape our crazy-paced lives for a bit.

The “30 Day Pre-Arrival Package” arrives: *If you haven't sent a picture for your bedroom, please do so this week. It can be of your family, your pets or anything that will make you feel like you are at home.* I consider sending

a photo of my two boys, ages 19 and 20, that reminds me of myself before excessive amounts of *spaghetti con i pomodorini del piennolo* got the best of me.

It also instructs us to bring at least three sets of hiking clothes. I've been hiking in some of the most remote areas in the world, including Mount Kilimanjaro, Bhutan and Mustang (a former independent

kingdom in Nepal), but I never took three sets!

Pre-arrival prep: Walk at least three days this week. No coffee. No alcohol. No sugar. Being Italian, I never follow the rules. I begin consuming more coffee than ever, having one more drink a day and adding just a little more sugar. After all, there has to be some reason to go to The Ranch.

One week left. The next e-mail arrives: *Seven days and counting until your Ranch journey begins! We hope you're getting excited.* No, I am not; I am petrified! *Make sure to remind*



your family and work that you will be off the grid for a week and will have limited access to e-mail and phone. They will celebrate; finally I will stop nagging!

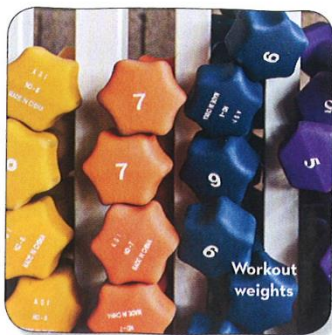
Cut back your toenails this week by getting a sport short pedicure. Make sure the toes are trimmed so that they don't interfere with your daily hiking, and don't buff out your calluses.

Now, really, do I need a sport pedicure? And that callus!

DAY ONE

The Ranch shuttle picks us up at noon from the Fairmont Hotel in Santa Monica. I'm surprised at how each of us has prepared for this week. One stopped drinking, another smoking. Me? I've done nothing!

Conversation is sketchy—a few mention that it's Super Bowl Sunday and, sadly, they will miss it. I, on the other hand, am



happy to get away from Berlusconi, the political scene and the financial disasters in Italy.

Ah, the scenery. The vegetation. Our hostess, co-owner Sue Glasscock, greets us. She personifies elegance and charm.

A weigh-in session is first thing, followed immediately by a two-hour hike, exercise, yoga and the endless countdown to dinner. Tempers start to flare; we're not used to being hungry. And you get hungry here. Damn Mies van der Rohe: Less is not always more.

Dinner is prepared to perfection, albeit in moderation; the daily regimen includes a 1,500-calorie vegetarian diet. The sweet-potato risotto is delicious though. If the Italians knew that in California an intrepid chef is preparing a risotto without Arborio rice—brown, no less—they'd be up in arms.

DAY TWO

The sound of bell chimes awakens us at 5 A.M. The sky is dark, the air still, and another day begins with 30 minutes of stretching. Next, a quick breakfast of granola and homemade almond milk. Where is my morning cappuccino? Hungry eyes scan other bowls hoping to steal a few scraps. This is primal instinct behavior!

After breakfast, it's a four-hour hike through the Santa Monica Mountains. The endless blue sea behind us, we make our

way up winding paths covered in multicolored wildflowers. It's tough—that's why Carla said no thanks. Yet conversations flow. Our group of 16 (the maximum allowed per week) starts to open up. Suddenly, a voice crackles through our walkie-talkies: "Hey, how much longer to go?" Silence follows—we're all wondering the same thing. "Thirty minutes left, over and out" comes the chirpy answer. This is quickly followed by another participant adding, "Hey, guys, this is not a spa. This is a fat camp!" Oh yes, that it is.

Conversation returns to the day's favorite topic, food, and what we will all eat once we leave (on the hike, our snack is three almonds and one dried apricot). Some of the more refined suggest Nobu, while others plainly confess they want one of the area's famous In-N-Out burgers.

The afternoon is grueling. Abs, quads, TRX training—every single muscle in our bodies is pushed to the limit. I imagine my lesser-used parts shouting, "Hey, 51 years of peace and suddenly The Ranch?!" The day draws to an end. As we eat our meager veggie dinner, only one thought exists: Bed, bed, beloved bed!

DAY THREE

All points of reference are lost as we brace ourselves for "Toxic Tuesday," when our bodies will finally start eliminating the toxins that up to now have held



us prisoner. Headaches and stiff necks set in. On our daily hike, I find Alex Glasscock, Sue's husband, by my side. I ask what inspired them to build this magical place. He candidly says that a few years ago he decided to go to an establishment with a similar concept but much more spartan.

To his great chagrin, he was assigned a room with a gentleman who snored, forcing him to sleep on the porch. And the bathroom? Communal. There had to be a better way to detox.

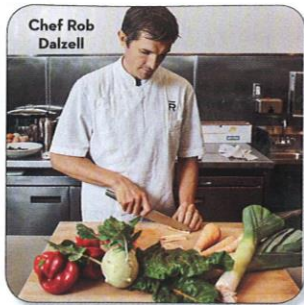
This, combined with reading a book by Isadore Sharp on the



business of running the Four Seasons Hotels, prompted him and Sue to come up with the idea of combining eight to nine hours of daily exercise overseen by talented professionals with vegetarian cuisine made from ingredients grown organically and offered in a simple yet luxurious setting. The result is a place where one can reboot mind, body and, most important, soul.

DAY FOUR

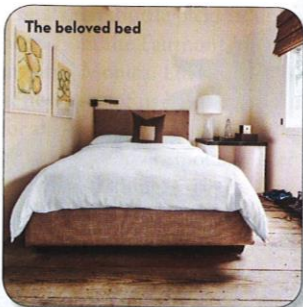
Today we talk nutrition with Marc Alabanza, the program director at The Ranch. He begins with the sad fact that Americans consume 63 percent of their calories from processed foods and only about 6 percent from plant food. I look around the table and see somber faces staring at him. Each of us is thinking, But I love my processed food. Suddenly,



Chef Rob Dalzell

he is bombarded with questions like “Between a Diet Coke and a regular Coke, which would you choose?” Marc takes a moment and then to everyone’s surprise answers, “Regular—at least it has no saccharine in it.” At this point, my good friend Crescenzo mentions that in Italy, where the Mediterranean diet is prevalent, people are healthier. “Now in France...” starts Omer, and suddenly the civilized conversation turns into a brawl in which every one of us is singing the praises of his country’s food as though it were a question of life or death.

Marc is forced to step in and bring some order back to the table. He continues his lecture by dissecting a label on a carton of one percent milk, showing us how to read between the lines. Omer says that he has fresh, unpasteurized milk delivered to his house in Paris. I can see the envy on some of the faces as the others start considering moving to Paris. But just when the day seems lost to the French, Crescenzo steps in and mentions that the only fish he eats are ones caught by his fisherman friend.



The beloved bed

THE RANCH

AT LIVE OAK / MALIBU

Your Ranch Report Card

Name: Antonio Sersale Week of: Feb 3, 2013
 Age: 51 Height: 168cm Sunday Weight: 72.75kg/160.39 lbs

Metric	Before	After	Δ	% Δ
Medical Scale Wt.	159.75	153.75	-6.00 lbs	-3.8%
Neck	14.75	14.25	-0.50 in.	-3.4%
Chest	36.75	36.00	-0.75 in.	-2.0%
Diaphragm	36.25	35.50	-0.75 in.	-2.1%
Waist	33.75	32.50	-1.25 in.	-3.7%
Abdomen	34.50	34.00	-0.50 in.	-1.4%
Hips	35.00	35.00	0.00 in.	0.0%
Buttocks	39.00	38.00	-1.00 in.	-2.6%
Rt Lower Quadriceps	17.25	17.25	0.00 in.	0.0%
Rt Knee	13.25	13.25	0.00 in.	0.0%
Rt Ankle	10.00	10.00	0.00 in.	0.0%
Rt Upper Arm	12.25	12.00	-0.25 in.	-2.0%

Physical Skills Test (PST)

	Before	After	Δ	% Δ
Pushups-Knees (1min)	10	-10	-100%	
Pushups-Reg (1min)	25	-25	-100%	
Crunches (1min)	20	-20	-100%	
Hamstring Flexibility	-4.00	3.00	7	

PM Class Attendance

Classes attended	11
Classes available (excluding massage time)	12
Percent Attendance	92%

Weekly Totals:

	Before	After	Δ	% Δ
Total Weight Lost:	-6.00 lb.			-3.8%
Midsection Inches Lost:	-3.50 in.			-2.0%
Total Inches Lost:	-5.00 in.			-1.8%

On his last day, Antonio received a stellar report card, having lost six pounds. A month later, we checked in with him: “I’ve gained back four pounds and have tried to keep away from my delicious morning coffee but have failed! I’ve tried to drink less but have failed! I’ve tried to exercise more but have failed! I’ve tried to stretch more and have made some progress! I will not touch a hamburger. Vegetables have become more important. But pasta is as tempting as ever. I eat granola instead of toast in the morning. As for my friends, from informal conversations we’ve had, I’d say we are all pretty much along the same lines.”

Very Italian, no? Now I can see a few participants almost stand up to rush to their rooms and pack for the Amalfi Coast. That fresh fish grilled and served to perfection in the Santa Caterina is just too much for us all to bear.

Marc, fearful of a mutiny, calmly continues describing which ingredients are best for us. Omer mentions that he has just added a super-food juice bar to his breakfast menu at the Royal Monceau, inspired by a trip to California. He does confess, though, that croissants are a dangerous temptation.

Marc goes on to describe the wonders of kale, while Crescenzo looks at me and asks, “So tell me, Antonio, where are we

going for lunch on Saturday when we leave here?” I answer, “Shutters on the Beach, of course!” And suddenly we both smile, knowing we will survive The Ranch if for no other reason than to enjoy a delicious lunch before returning to our beloved Mediterranean cuisine.

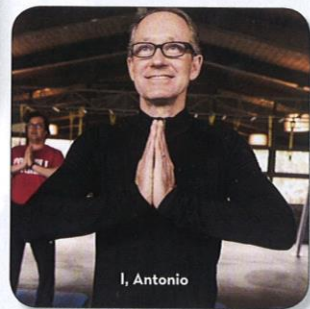
DAY FIVE

It is our last night. The aroma of pumpkin soup envelopes us at dinner while a sense of sadness hangs in the air. We should be happy to have flourished under the most adverse conditions. Many have blisters on their feet. Some have painful Achilles tendons from hiking. Yet we are not

celebrating the end of the week. We are all fearing the tidal wave that will overtake us the moment we walk out of these all-embracing gates, back to the lives we put on hold for the week.

As the conversation goes around the table, I become aware of the struggle each of us will face trying to adapt. Do we incorporate the notions so diligently taught this week? Do we force ourselves to make this a turning point, aiming for a healthier existence? Or do we throw it all to the wind and return to our old habits, indulging, drinking and living in total disregard for our bodies?

I fear some of the more disciplined Anglo-Saxons among us



I, Antonio

might have a bit more luck than us Italians, a few of whom have already contacted their wives asking them to fill the fridge with numerous delicacies.

The evening continues around the fireplace, and we all realize how fortunate we were to share this incredible experience with friends who were always supportive and embracing even in the most difficult moments. ♦

A weeklong Fitness/Wellness Immersion package at The Ranch at Live Oak/Malibu starts at \$5,800. The Ranch 4.0, a four-day version, launches in September and starts at \$3,800. To book, call 888-777-2177 or go to theranchmalibu.com.

