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Have another drink? Better think twice

WE LOVE MONDAYS at Bench Gym. We enjoy hearing clients' stories of weekend activities. New restaurants or bars tried, a trip to Paris, or staying home, chilling with some wine, or a cocktail.

Weekends are great, but sometimes they lead to a bit too much consumption of alcohol. Most active people follow a healthy diet or ban unhealthy food, but often they will happily consume a cocktail or cocktails without giving it a second thought. We don't mean that the occasional cocktail will instantly result in a beer belly. However, while most alcohol contains no fat, its calories do tend to be stored in the abdomen.

Knowing how many calories are in your drink will make you not only a smarter drinker but it will also make you healthier and thinner. Evidence has come to light that only a small amount of alcohol is converted to fat (sounds like good news?). Rather, it is converted into a molecule called acetate by the liver. This is how the body keeps alcohol in the blood stream from poisoning us.

But because the body will burn acetate before fat, this will slow down fat metabolism by as much as 73 percent. Thus, consuming alcoholic drinks with high fat content (i.e., drinks with cream or sugary mix) increases the amount of fat stored in your body.

There is hope, however. You can lessen the impact of alcohol by drinking low-calorie, low-fat drinks, aka "skinny drinks." Some may be devoid of taste, but that's a small price to pay compared to hours in the gym or skipping dessert.

If you exercise regularly and are in reasonably good physical shape, drinking a few cocktails won't be a big deal. But of you're trying to shed a few pounds, alcohol can jeopardize your hard-earned progress. Each sip will increase your tendency to forget about things such as calories.

Remember: moderation is the key. A healthy lifestyle is one that allows you to experience life and enjoy the fun things that are part of it.

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The Bench Gym way

At Bench Gym, we design fitness programs to meet individual goals in a welcoming and family environment. Our skilled professional trainers will keep you motivated to help you achieve your fitness goal, whether your it's to reduce your waist size or lower your blood sugar. We don't focus on what the scale says; we focus on prevention.

Contact

Jon Ponce at benchgym@aol.com or 202.775.9400 for your personal training schedule.



She smiled and said, 'Thank you, guys'

Or, how I went out for coffee and became part of the Gaga entourage

By Jon Ponce
(As told to JRP)

ON A RECENT weekend trip to New York, a friend and I left the apartment where I was staying on Central Park West to walk down the street for my daily dose of Starbucks. It was late on a July Saturday morning but there were still – surprisingly – relatively few people out and about.

Walking back, we noticed a small contingent of oddly dressed people (that is, oddly dressed as seen through a non-New Yorker's eyes) beginning to cross the street, coming in my direction. I turned to take a quick look and what I saw almost caused me to drop my coffee.

My eyes told me it was Lady Gaga but my brain told me, "No way! If she was Lady Gaga, why isn't she in a limo? Would the great Miss LG really be out on an NYC street on a Saturday morning with only a handful of hangers-on?" My first thought was that she (he?) was probably an impersonator, just getting home after a night out. (Hey, it's New York!)

Their timing was perfect, and as we reached the street corner, we were walking right along with her group. I was walking not more than a couple of feet behind her, doing my best not to raise any suspicion about my presence in this odd group's midst, and being careful not to bump into her should she stop.

Being that close allowed me to listen to the group's conversation – and to take a closer look at her ass and hips. I decided she was definitely a woman.

As we neared my building, the group swerved into a nearby restaurant. I walked a few steps, then turned to take another look. It was then that I saw her distinctive tattoos, and with that I was sure she was the real thing.

Meekly, I asked if I could have a picture taken with her and she happily said yes. This didn't please one of her managers, who insisted that we hurry up so that we wouldn't blow their cover. But The Lady was not to be rushed. As I stood beside her, my heart was pounding with excitement, but I was able to gather up the nerve to cautiously, tentatively, wrap one arm around her hips. And then it happened: she put her arm around my shoulder and moved her face closer to me! I was mortified! I was wearing the T-shirt I'd slept in and I had no idea what I smelled like!

To my surprise, her entourage just stood back and let her do her thing.

"This must be my lucky day," I said, almost whispering. And she smiled. As she went in the restaurant, she said, smiling, "Thank you guys."

WHEN I GOT back to DC, few people would believe me. They all thought I was making it up, or that it was an impersonator. But a few days later, US magazine ran photos of her in New York wearing almost the same outfit. And then Ken, a Bench Gym client and a fashion aficionado, took one look at the picture and said, "That's Versace – she's the real thing!"