

Selling Healthy

St. Pete-based entrepreneur Dawna Stone is preaching what she practices in a new diet book



JAY CONNER/STAFF

Entrepreneur and author Dawna Stone dines on a salad topped with salmon at Bella Brava in St Petersburg.

BY MARY SHEDDEN
Tribune Staff

Fifteen years ago, Dawna Stone knew she was on to something. An ongoing battle with weight and failed diets led her to cook up a plan of her own. It took a lot of tweaking, but it was the first plan that stuck.

The aspiring executive and entrepreneur shared her notes with coworkers, and then a few friends. Eventually, the former college swimmer and triathlete gave her advice to clients at a personal training business she opened in Southern California. The concept would make for a great diet book, she thought.

But other endeavors kept getting in the way. There was marriage, then her 2005 reality show adventure on "The Apprentice" spin-off with Martha Stewart, which she won. The subsequent creation of a women's fitness magazine and a national half-marathon series absorbed immense chunks of time, not to mention the births of her two children.

It wasn't until Stone sold the St. Petersburg-based Women's Running magazine in 2012 that she put her idea for a diet book back on the front burner. The result, "Healthy You! 14 Days to Quick and Permanent Weight Loss and a Happier, Healthier You" (\$14.99 at dawnastone.com or Amazon.com) will be released Tuesday.

Stone, 45, recently spoke of her resolve to self-publish the eating plan she developed as a young adult — and successfully retested after the birth of her daughter, who is now in kindergarten, and her preschool-aged son.

Most people know you as Martha Stewart's "Apprentice" and may be surprised that you gained 40 pounds after graduating from

college in California.

"I had always been fit, and then I graduated from college and I went to New York and worked on Wall Street. From there, it went haywire. I was working till midnight, one in the morning. People were doing pizza runs and Popeye's chicken runs and runs for foods that I never ever ate before. ... And I was not only feeling unhealthy, I was unhappy."

"... I remember being in New York City in my apartment, in bed and in tears thinking 'I'm smart, I have this great job, I have this great education. Why can't I control this one thing?' I mean, I was an athlete. I've always achieved pretty much everything I ever went after. And I could not achieve weight loss, no matter

what. It was the one thing in my life that I couldn't control at all."

Programs such as Jenny Craig and Weight Watchers didn't work for you. But you also acknowledge that your concept won't appeal to everyone. Who is it for?

"I think there are people who need that kind of community, who can go and have that Wednesday weigh-in ... to convince them on Tuesday that they might not want to have that giant piece of cake.

"This book is for people like me, who struggle constantly and have given up and maybe have tried those other options. ... The specific plan is really about eating healthy. It's not a program that counts calories. ... The whole goal here is to make you rethink what you are currently eating."

Your two-week plan uses the first seven days to eliminate a different type of food one day a time: sugar, wheat, daily, highly processed foods, diet soda and artificial sweeteners, red meat and alcohol. In your own experience, which one did you need to eliminate first?

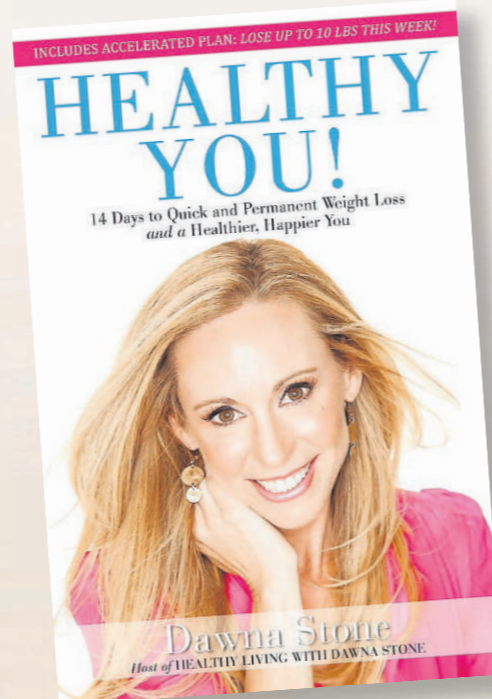
"I started taking away the unhealthy refined sugars — like KitKat bars for me — and just starting eating in moderation. I remember telling myself, 'I'm not asking you to completely eliminate sugar, but maybe Monday through Friday when you are at work. ...

"On the weekends, if I wanted to have an ice cream or a scone, I would ... and I started feeling better, and I just started doing the same with other unhealthy things in my diet.

Have people who have tried the plan struggled with giving up certain foods?

"Sugar and alcohol. ... A lot of people, even if

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Stone is with husband Matt Dieter, son Luke and daughter Kaelie.

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