



Count James Hester among the converted. After he tried Roni DeLuz's diet, he moved to the Vineyard and now together they spread the gospel of juicing.

KATHRYN OSGOOD

All juiced up

A new diet book showcases the Vineyard



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We live on an island of perception. Post cards of sunset beaches and bucolic farmlands. Snapshots of lighthouses and lobster traps. The Island's image is embedded with an analogous nostalgia for Vineyard food: fried clams, ice cream cones, lobster rolls. But in this mélange of Vineyard iconography, there is a reality that had quietly trickled, but now flows. What slender bodies are ever a result of clam chowder or saltwater taffy? The diet buzz here is about detox.

This isn't the detoxing from drugs or alcohol. This is about detoxing by drinking juices, teas, and soups, cleansing the body of the hazards that besiege us, from the food we eat and the air we breath to the stresses we live under – and, oh yes, the weight we gain.

Just ask "Rock-n-Roll Rick" Paddilla of the Vineyard-based band Mercy Beat. He recently completed a therapeutic juice-fast class, taught by Dr. Oceana Rames. According to him, it was "unbelievable." As a house painter, Rick has been exposed to a lot of fumes, paint, and chemicals for a long time. Over the course of his fourteen-day juice fast, he lost weight, but more importantly, he says, "I felt like a kid again. . . . It was a revelation!" The Oak Bluffs resident wishes more people, particularly the

construction-crew guys, would learn about detoxing and give it a try. "If they only knew how good they'd feel," he says. "These fasts aren't just for the earthy-crunchy-granola types."

Home detox remedies like organic apple-cider vinegar; warm water with raw honey or molasses; or the lemon juice, cayenne pepper, and maple syrup concoction known as the Master Cleanse are easy, accessible, common-sense health drinks. According to Mark Ripa, the manager of Healthy Additions on State Road in Tisbury, more complex cleansing treatments are "a highly sought out product line" in his store.

Now, thanks to the recent release of *21 Pounds in 21 Days: The Martha's Vineyard Diet Detox* (Collins, May 2007) by Roni DeLuz and James Hester, the Vineyard is making headlines as a destination for holistic health, healing, and cleansing. When *21 Pounds in 21 Days* hit bookstands on May 8, it ranked No. 271 on Amazon.com sales overall and No. 77 in the "Health, Mind and Body" category. With guest appearances by Roni on shows such as *Inside Edition* and coverage in *Vogue*, the *New York Post*, and *The Boston Globe* – coupled with hefty weight-loss claims and the chichi name recognition of Martha's Vineyard – the book is letting health-minded tourists in on what's been an inconspicuous Island reality.

Roni is a mother of two, an Island resident, and the founder of the Martha's Vineyard Holistic Retreat on Franklin Street in Vineyard Haven. Her role as a juice-diet maven began after her health spiraled downhill in 1987. Her symptoms included joint pain, muscle spasms, a racing heart. Her thinking became foggy. As her health declined, her prescription-drug intake increased, even though there was still no definite diagnosis. Eventually, she became depressed and bedridden. A friend finally talked her into getting a colonic – which was the beginning of her road to recovery and her journey into holistic health alternatives. It took years before she identified her health problems as "environmental illness" (or E.I.).

After moving to the Island in 1992,



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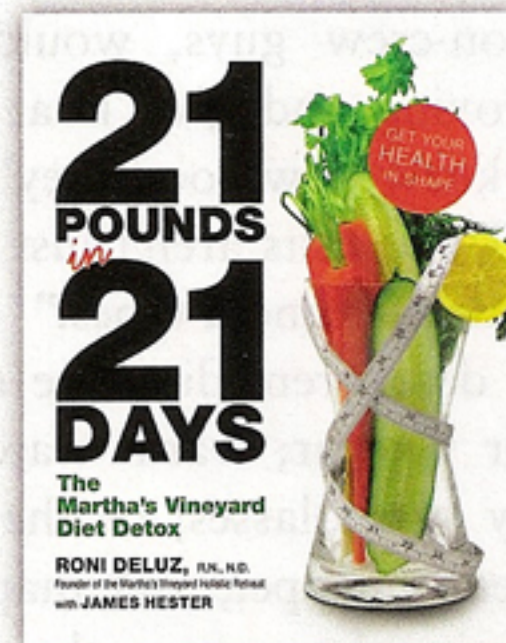
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Roni worked as a nurse at Windemere. Dismayed at the amount of pharmaceuticals patients were prescribed, she wanted to teach people how to “repair, regenerate, and rejuvenate themselves by detoxifying their bodies,” as she writes in the book. She started a side job, spurred on by her own illness and recovery through detoxing, to work with people who were interested in weaning themselves from many and varied medications. She also started a chronic fatigue syndrome support group. The word spread. Roni had quietly become known for her special healing capabilities. “My house was filled with friends and guests wanting me to help them get better from CFS, cancer, diabetes, multiple sclerosis,” she writes. After her son Toron was born in 1996, she systematically developed the regime and philosophy behind her “Martha’s Vineyard Diet Detox” and subsequently opened the holistic retreat.

The premise of Roni’s detox diet is that toxins settle in our system from the food we eat and the environment we live in. By cleansing the body, you can lose weight, but more importantly, she says, you make a step toward a healthy lifestyle that, if maintained, can enable you to keep the weight off.

Her regime includes drinking liquids every two hours. Liquid meals – live green drinks, berry drinks, tea, puréed soup, probiotics, vitamin supplements, digestive enzymes, and lots of distilled water – are interspersed with quiet walks, saunas or whirlpools, massages, and scheduled treatments like colonics and coffee enemas. “I tell my clients all the time,” Roni says, “wellness is a process. There is no magic. It’s about repairing and rebuilding and understand-

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ing that. Cleaning the mind, the body, opening the spirit allows that to happen. And that's the first step."

Up until now, word of mouth is how most people found themselves on her doorstep. That's how her co-author, James Hester – a refugee from the high-impact world of music publicity – found her, and Roni is the reason why he then moved to Oak Bluffs. James not only knows how to market their book, he also believes in "Dr. Roni" and detoxing. "This saved my life," he says, and he means it. He writes in his testimonial with the fervency of the converted: "I have undergone a physical, mental, and spiritual transformation."

According to James, a few police officers on-Island are doing the at-home program, which costs about \$10 to \$12 a day in supplements, as opposed to a live-in stay at the holistic retreat, which runs \$495 per day for a room, supplements, juice, soup, and one treatment a day (e.g., a colonic).

As emotional issues will challenge anyone undergoing such an intensive detoxing experience, Roni (whose long list of qualifications includes being a registered nurse, traditional naturopathic doctor, lifestyle consultant, certified colonic therapist, and a hypnotherapist, and having a doctorate in natural health) respects her limits. "Wellness is a huge responsibility." So when something happens that is out of her league, she reaches out to the health and healing community on the Island. Reiki, chiropractics, massage therapy, acupuncture – she utilizes them all.

Yet Roni states adamantly, "There's still a lot of education about holistic services and wellness that we need here." With regard to the food choices available on the Island, she repeats a much-asked refrain: "What if there was a healthy vegetarian restaurant with good, clean food? That," she says, "would cater to a whole other type of tourist, and clientele." While the Island is known for its chowder and chili feasts, and we pride ourselves that we've no McDonald's, we have no big, year-round juice bar either. ♦

– ALI BERLOW

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