



For my wedding, I vowed to get my skin and body in the best shape of my life. With my date just a week before my 36th birthday, I knew that it would take discipline and dedication—lets be honest, with age, simply opting for salads at lunch and slathering on a moisturizing face mask weekly isn't going to cut it. If I wanted a sleek silhouette, including the elevated booty and Madonna-like arms that would so elegantly complement my beloved **Kenneth Pool "Celia" gown**, I was going to have to work for it. If I wanted to turn back the clock on sun damage, enlarged pores and those expression lines on my forehead, I was going to have to be diligent with my at-home and in-office treatments. After a few months of albeit, intense workouts, super clean eating and consistent beauty appointments, I was not only 15 pounds lighter, I was more toned all over. I had legit curves. My skin was glowing and smooth. When I slipped on my dress that day and looked at my reflection, I felt transformed.

I will preface the month-by-month plan below, that potentially could be deemed extreme by some, with this: I am a beauty girl. I write about breakthroughs, innovations, treatments, and products in beauty and fitness for a living. It's in my blood, and I know as much as anyone the power that they can have not only physically but mentally—I was willing to do it all. What you feel when you see yourself in the mirror is more than skin deep. Bottom line: do what you need to do to be your best self. I promise, your hard work and the cost will be worth it.

### *Countdown: 5 Months*

I knew it was time to start perfecting my skin. Especially because my main complexion concerns, although not severe (i.e. subtle sun damage all over and enlarged pores as well as just obtaining an inherent glow), would require repetitive treatments to see stellar results. I made an appointment with my amazing dermatologist, **Dr. Neal Schultz**, who recommended getting his signature 40 percent glycolic peel on my face, chest and hands ever two weeks and applying his **SPF50 sunscreen** daily under my makeup to ward off future damage. I immediately penciled the biweekly sessions into my iCalendar to slough away dead skin, keep my pores clear and help erase dark spots over time. Regardless of what else I had going on, I made time to pop over to his office on Park Avenue or his **Beauty Rx Peel Bar** outpost at the Flatiron Butterfly Salon for a quickie two-minute (with zero redness) session. Not only did my stress-induced breakouts stop, but also after a few weeks, I could see that my skin was looking more radiant.

While living by the beach for the summer at my New Jersey home, I knew I had to jumpstart my fitness routine and lay the foundation for a slimmed down physique worthy of my wow-factor dress. I started off with personal training sessions with local fitness expert, Mark Hibbard, founder of **Next Level Fitness**. I showed him a picture of my dress. so that he could not only tailor my workouts to hit my trouble spots (the usual female-focused suspects such as toning up my triceps, flattening the lower area of my belly and strengthening and tightening up my legs) but also focus on what made sense for my dress. Not only were my arms exposed, the plunging illusion neckline and open back as well as the form-fitting backside meant that I had to look lean from every angle. For the next two months, I showed up with my hair slicked back ready to work for 60 minutes, three times a week, regardless if I was tired, hung over or too busy. Each time, we would start with a dynamic warm-up (think high knees and walking lunges), then alternate days of cardio bursts and strengthening—all with my beloved Celia as the main get-fit goal.

### *Countdown: 4 Months*

Now that I had the dress, I also knew how I did—and did not—want to wear my hair. I envisioned long blonde hair side swept over my right shoulder in cascading finger waves. Which meant, I needed to grow my hair as long as possible so that I didn't lose length from pulling it all to one side. I booked an appointment with Bumble&Bumble hair stylist **Denise McLaughlin** in the Meatpacking district to explain my vision and she showed her a picture of the stunning exposed and lace-lined back of my dress that simply could not be hidden behind my hair. She put me on a 8-10 week strict trim protocol to snip off dead ends and prevent breakage, which would allow my hair to grow and still look super healthy.

My three times a week sweat sessions with Mark continued. A month into it, instead of being able to only execute five perfect pushups, I could do ten while he added a resistance band around my waist as well. In lieu of the regular calve raises I started out doing, he would have me hold a ten pound weight now, and chest press with 25 instead of 15 pound dumbbells. I steered clear of the scale, opting to judge my results by how easily my pants zipped up and how much faster I could get through his relentless cardio blasts.

### *Countdown: 3 Months*

I have been a **Barry's Bootcamp**-er for a few years, however my attendance has ebbed and flowed. I am well aware of the body benefits of HIIT training and Barry's does not disappoint. Now that I was back in the city full time, I began booking the 60-minute cardio and strength training class three times a week to replace my personal trainer one-on-ones and kept that up all of the following month as well. After that, I increased sessions to 4-5 times per week in the final month leading up to my wedding day.

As a beauty and health writer, I have heard over and over from experts that when it comes to losing excess fat, we truly are what we eat. So as much as you try to hit the gym or bike for 60 minutes a few times a week, workouts alone cannot reverse the effects of a poor (read: carb, calorie and sugar laden diet). With 90 days to go, I knew that I could not start an extreme clean diet just yet, as that wasn't entirely sustainable, but I began to make smart and doable tweaks. First, swapping out carbs in the a.m. for protein (a plain Greek yogurt with sliced banana, an omelet with veggies or a **Juice Generation** Peanut Butter Split smoothie) as well as cutting alcohol intake down to three days a week. At my first fitting, while I still knew I had more to do, I went Spanx free and visually honed in on where I needed to step it up (belly and arms!).

### *Countdown: 2 Months*

To me, along with the dress, my hair and skin were two crucial components to completing my look. Sure, makeup was essential, but it would come naturally if my skin was gorgeous. Since my hair was not going to be down and flowing, it needed to be in amazing shape. Just like my figure, they too were on full display. I wanted my hair color to be just right: bright blonde and not at all brassy. I booked an appointment with **Arrojo** colorist Taylor Kline who painted on a head full of highlights, then whipped up a slightly deeper shade to paint over the darker pieces, and then finished with a toner. Suddenly, my tired blonde was Kate Hudson vibrant. She told me to use a purple conditioner 1-2 times a week (like my favorite **Christophe Robin hair mask** for Baby Blonde hair) and to come in for a mini-touch up two weeks before.

While my lioness-like hair is not only long but also thick and full, my nails are in a constant state of carnage, breaking below my skin line before they even have a chance to grow. To make my tips photo-op ready, I hit the drugstore for over-the-counter **One-A-Day** prenatal vitamins. I popped one every a.m. and threw a few in my bag to have on the go. After a month, I had long, rounded nails like I have never had in my life.

After walking through a sea of DVF and Philip Lim, I located the **Blink Brow Bar** at **Saks Fifth Avenue**. I explained that I wanted eyelash extensions instead of wearing glued on falsies because everyone claims you need the length for your eyes to stand out in pictures, but I wasn't a fan of the fake effect. Brow expert, Sabah Feroz, told me lay down in the reclining chair and close my eyes. An hour later, I fluttered my eyes open to super fine lashes that were not only longer, fuller and perfectly graduated, but created a natural uptick at the corners and were completely undetectable.

### *Countdown: 1 Month*

With the number of my face-neck-hands glycolic peels now in the double digits, I pointed to the two lines on my forehead and between my brows that were there even when my face was at rest. "It's time for your matrimonial Botox," said Dr. Schultz. After a few pricks and ten minutes with an icepack, I was on my way to totally naturally-looking smooth skin.

I consider myself well versed in an array of workouts, and by now, after months of planks and squats and sprints, I was definitely stronger than when I started this plan. When my super fit friend told me that **SLT** (stands for strengthen, lengthen and tone) was the ticket to carving out the last of the curves I so craved, I immediately signed up. I did their cult-favorite SLT Challenge, where acolytes vow to get on their 'megaformer' (essentially a souped up Pilates machine) three times a week for a month—Hardest. Workout. Of. My. Life. My arms, legs and core were targeted like never before. It was exactly what I needed to take my **Celia**-centric curves to the next level and it did not disappoint. After the four weeks and 12 sessions, my belly was flatter, my arms more chiseled and I swear, you could see my quads through my **lulu's** without even flexing.

### *Countdown: 3 Weeks Before*

My skin looked fantastic. But even slathering on SPF 50 like it was my job could not stop a weekend in Florida from taking my skin into a tailspin, initiating a never-before-seen case of melasma. I panicked. All those months of skin appointments for nothing! A friend pointed me in the direction of a light therapy called **Clear+Brilliant** with her Gervaise Gerstner, MD. I made sure to alternate sessions with my glycolic peels to give my skin time to recover. After one pass of a heated red light on my skin and an icepack for about five minutes, I left the office only slightly pink. Within three hours post-treatment, there wasn't a trace of red. And a few days later, I saw that the large brown circles on each of my cheekbones were not quite as prominent, and I promptly booked follow-up sessions for the next two weeks.

At this point, I can totally see my body transforming. The muscle tone in my arms, belly and legs is more defined and I can power through workouts and try the more difficult versions of the moves as well. I continue my six days a week sweat sessions, calling on fit friends to join me as many times as possible to keep me focused and motivated.

### *Countdown: 2 Weeks*

This week is all about maintenance. I head uptown for my second to last glycolic peel with Dr. Schultz. Later in the week, I stopped in to see Dr. Gervaise who suggests we do a second **Clear+Brilliant** treatment, but this time to lessen pore size not target pigment which uses a different level of light and heat and won't be too much on my skin. I am getting compliments on how my complexion looks with zero makeup on (I wore NONE the last two weeks to keep pores completely clear), and with my daily workouts consuming my days (alternating between Barry's Bootcamp and SLT classes) and natural glow, I didn't even need tinted moisturizer or blush. At Arrojo salon in TriBeCa, I get a quick color touchup to remove the brassiness that has inevitably built up in the last few weeks, and Taylor brings my blonde back to the perfect shade.

### *Countdown: 1 Week*

My main focus is keeping my skin in check. I inspect each pore every morning and night to make sure there's nothing brewing underneath the surface that may cause major issues the day-of. Dr. Schultz gives me one last peel trifacta as well as troubleshoots one potentially scary breakout that is forming on my upper right cheekbone. Dr. Gerstner insists that if she was me, she would absolutely do one last Clear+Brilliant to break down any remaining pigmentation near the surface. Since I had no adverse reaction the other two times, I too felt confident it would be safe to do one last one this close to my wedding day. At last—operation best skin of my life is complete!

As my mind raced through any potentially last minute disastrous occurrences, I thought of sweating. If my anxiety shot through the roof, my sweat glands could kick into overdrive. Having wet circles on my gown was a scary thought that I wasn't willing to risk. **Dr. Paul Jarrod Frank** squeezed me in that same day and after numbing my underarms for about 20 minutes with a topical cream, he did a few quick injections all over the area. Sweat? What sweat?

With my honeymoon in St. Barths planned, I was finally getting to wear my hot, new, high-cut **Eres** suit. I booked a Brazilian Bikini wax at the downtown **Haven Spa**, my go to because of their no nonsense yet comforting demeanor during an otherwise excruciating experience.

Everyone had told me that the week leading up to the wedding was when I would see the payoff of all my hard work. While this was totally true, I knew that I still wanted to stick to my get-fit plan and not veer off until I was sitting poolside in St. Barths. Continuing to nix alcohol, sugar, and simple carbs, I ordered five days of **Sakara Life**, the celebrity and model favorite plant-based food delivery program that sends pre-made and perfectly packed meals that I could easily eat on the go and at home without stressing over how to cook or eat clean. Game. Changer. I felt lighter, less bloated and looked leaner. Taking food planning off my plate felt like a relief as I focused on the last minute check list: seating charts, table names, decorations and planning the rehearsal dinner.

### *Countdown: 24 Hours*

On the morning of, I woke up at 6am from pure adrenaline and excitement (no alarm required). During hair and makeup, I couldn't even think of consuming one of the bagels from the huge breakfast display set up for my female entourage. But, I did know one thing: I was going to eat at the wedding. The mayhem and tight schedule of photos and the ceremony would be done soon enough, and my husband and I would be able to share our first meal together. I also couldn't wait to get my now married hands on a glass (or two or three!) of champagne. But, every time I sat down to chow down on the French roast cut chicken, potatoes and artisanal bread basket, we were surrounded by well wishers and loved ones. I wanted to take it all in; savor the moment, not the food. And so, starved at 1am and after stepping out of my beloved gown, I ran into the kitchen and boiled a huge pot of water. Sam and I each devoured a bowl of pasta and washed it down with a glass of Moet overlooking the ocean before heading to bed, full of love.