

At home with ... Chata Romano

"First impressions count" is more than just a catch phrase Chata Romano uses to influence her clients - it's the very basis of her existence and something she achieves through careful grooming and a lifestyle of healthy eating and exercise.



Fashion consultant extraordinaire, Chata radiates the confidence and style that makes her business the success that it is. She's a neatly packaged dynamo of precision dressing and styling - a walking advertisement for her company. In her teens, Chata used to help her friend's mothers decide on what outfits to wear to special occasions and when she turned 19, she channelled her special talent and feel for fashion into a fitting career - that of a fashion buyer for The Wooltru Group. This was to give her marketing and merchandise training, an important foundation for the business she was to initiate. At about this time Chata met her future husband, Avri, who today is her partner and a fundamental part of the company. Together they vowed to be running their own business by the time Chata was 25 - a goal they managed to fulfil.



What exactly is a fashion consultant? Chata's job entails more than merely advising women on what they should wear. She offers a full service - from colour co-ordination, to the fundamentals of wardrobe planning, to tips on travel and grooming. Chata puts a lot of emphasis on the individual. "What might be right for someone else is not necessarily right for you," she says. "No-one is ever one hundred percent happy with their body - I help people to make the most of their strong points and to downplay their weaknesses."

Although Chata does see a lot of clients on a one-to-one basis, she also gives seminars and workshops. "Big corporations often approach me to talk to their staff to help improve their company identity. First impressions really do count in the business world and I find that if people feel good about themselves, productivity is definitely increased."

"You don't need to have a lot of money to still be elegant and stylish - people just need to work within their limits," she says. Chata works on the basis that your wardrobe should consist of fifty percent of good basics, thirty percent combination of basics and fashion and twenty percent latest fashion - but only if the fashion suits you! To keep up with the continual changing face of fashion, Chata travels locally extensively and overseas periodically, and this experience helps her to offer even further

advice to clients on how to pack for overseas trips. "You must take outfits that can be mixed and matched - everything you take should match with at least three other items in your existing wardrobe," she says. "You must have sufficient casual and formal outfits and should always take more tops than bottoms, at least five tops for one bottom."

Keeping Up The Pace

When she's not travelling, Chata's day usually starts at 6 am and can end as late as 9 pm, depending on the client she is seeing. Her inherent self-discipline is evident, not only from her working schedule, but from her appearance as well. "I'm 5 foot, so I have to watch my weight," she smiles. Mornings start with a brisk swim in the pool at the gym. Chata admits she's not fond of exercise but knows how essential it is. "I always allocate about one to one and a half hours each morning to a gentle workout. I'm not really interested in high-impact aerobics or anything so strenuous." When it comes to food, lunch is Chata's most important meal of the day. "I used to be so rushed I

never had the time, but now I make sure that I have an hour off every day to go home and enjoy a healthy lunch." Chata admits that her husband is the one who spends the time in the kitchen. "He's amazing," she praises. "He can go to what looks like an empty fridge and create a wonderful meal." Lunch generally consists of a lovely big salad, with goat's milk cheese and carrots and cashews and avocado or a nice baked potato or something equally healthy. She never eats after 7 pm.

The nature of her work entails many business lunches, which she has her own way of handling. "I only eat portions the size of my fist. This is supposedly the size of your stomach - so you really don't need to eat more than that. I also avoid creamy sauces and never have both a main meal and a starter."

Chata does allow her discipline to relax a little when she takes a holiday. (Which isn't very often.)

On the rare occasions when Chata has some spare time to herself, she loves to sit and do nothing. "I just spend the time with my husband, we get to talk about everything other than the business and just relax!" The following recipes, are typical examples of the light and healthy way of eating that Chata follows to keep her figure trim and her energy levels high for the strenuous daily schedule she follows:

Breakfast:

MANGO AND YOGHURT WAKE-UP

Serves 1

- 1 mango
- 100 ml Bulgarian yoghurt
- 10 ml sunflower seeds
- 10 ml raisins
- 10 ml mixed nuts, chopped

1. Slice the mango and arrange onto a plate. Pour over the yoghurt.
2. Sprinkle over the sunflower seeds, raisins and nuts.

Lunch:

CHICKEN LIVER SALAD

Serves 1

- 50 g chicken livers
- 1 pearl onion
- 100 g chicken breast, cooked
- Herbamare salt
- few drops Tabasco
- quarter clove garlic, crushed
- pinch turmeric
- 10 ml parsley
- few lettuce leaves
- 10 ml olive oil
- 5 ml fresh lemon juice
- 1 carrot, grated
- half avocado

1. In a pan, lightly fry the chicken livers and the onion and chicken meat, taking care not to overcook.
2. Add a little Herbamare, Tabasco, garlic, turmeric and parsley. (Take care not to overspice as the natural flavours are best.)
3. Prepare a bed of lettuce. Spice with a touch of olive oil, Herbamare salt and fresh lemon juice.
4. Add grated carrot. Mix the salad, by turning the bottom part to the top.

(Over mixing makes the salad soggy and the fresh taste is lost.)

5. Place the chicken liver mixture on top of the bed of salad. Place a few slices of ripe avocado around it. (Do not flavour the avocado.)



RICE

- rice
- Herbamare salt
- 2 ml turmeric
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 100 g garden peas
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 green pepper, finely chopped
- 50 g butter

Dinner:

LIGHT AND HEALTHY STEW

Serves 4 - 6

- 700 g lamb OR ox tail OR beef
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 30 ml fresh parsley
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- salt
- 5 ml masala
- peri peri powder
- 5 ml turmeric
- 5 ml cumin
- 2 bay leaves
- 5 ml marjoram
- soup powder
- cornflour
- 100 g prunes, stoned
- 6 pearl onions, finely chopped
- 3 potatoes, diced
- 200 g broccoli (optional)
- 100 g carrots (optional)

1. In a pot, boil a little water. Reduce the heat and add the meat. (Cook the meat over a low heat, taking care not to fry.)
2. Add the garlic, parsley, rosemary, salt, masala, peri peri, turmeric, cumin, cloves, bay leaves, marjoram and soup powder. To thicken, add the cornflour mixed to a paste with water.
3. Add the prunes, onions, potatoes, broccoli and carrots.
4. Fill a pot with boiling water and allow to simmer on 50°C for 8 hours. Stir the dish gently a couple of times, taking care not to break the meat.

RICE

1. In a pot, place the rice. Add the Herbamare salt, turmeric, garlic, garden peas, onion, green pepper and butter.

To Serve

Serve stew and rice together or separately.