

# LONG LIVE TESS!

WE TALK TO THE  
QUEEN OF SATURDAY  
NIGHT TV, TO FIND  
OUT HOW SHE STAYS  
FIT, HEALTHY  
AND FABULOUS

WORDS: Joanna Ebsworth



**Y**ou can only watch with admiration as Tess Daly poses up a storm for our *H&F* cover shoot. It's not just her sparkling eyes, dazzling smile and glowing skin that are alluring. Or the way she moves so gracefully and naturally for our photographer (something that should come as no surprise considering she's spent the last 32 years professionally working the camera after being model scouted at the age of 17). It's her energy – boundless, enthusiastic and infectious – that's so captivating to be around.

As we break for lunch and Tess joins the team around the dining table to eat – soon passing on her tips to make the perfect homemade chicken burger (she's a 'total foodie', but more of that later) – it's confirmed that she's funny, frank and super-friendly. And, as we're about to discover as we head to the sofa to start our interview, she's also just a little bit formidable. Taking a sneaky peek at our questions, the *Strictly Come Dancing* presenter let's out a scornful, hearty laugh and sighs. When we ask if she's okay, she simply replies, 'It just amuses me that your first question is about age.'

It's true, our first question reads: 'What's your secret to looking so amazing at 49?' There's an awkward silence, and we panic. Because many of the questions we're planning to ask Tess relate to her age and how that impacts her changing philosophy on fitness, nutrition, wellbeing and beauty because she does look really amazing – at least 10 years younger in the flesh – and we want to know how! But before we can start furiously backtracking, Tess launches into an explanation.

'I read an interview with the actress Jessica Chastain, where she said that she believes the age question should be banned now when talking to women in media and entertainment, because it's just another label that's used to judge us, whereas men are not judged by it at all,' she says. 'Why are we labelled by [our age]? We shouldn't be. As soon as you hit 40, you have to defend your right to be that "great age", and still working in the media.'

'But why should I defend my great age? I feel fantastic. I have the luxury of being alive and healthy, and I'm very grateful for that. You only notice [the age question] when you keep being asked about it. It just seems sexist and limiting. Not that I'm accusing you of that,' she adds reassuringly. 'But I hope it changes for our daughters.'

## MUM'S THE WORD

Tess's daughters (Phoebe, 13, and Amber, 8), it's fair to assume from the rest of the interview, are her inspiration and motivation in everything she does. From asking how





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she likes to relax after a long, stressful day at work – ‘I cuddle my children’ – and whether she enjoys red-carpet events – ‘I have to attend them for work but, by choice, I’d rather be chilling with my family’ – to finding out how she feels about discovering a new wrinkle – ‘I don’t obsess because what’s the point? I’ve got two children to worry about who need me to be fully present for them’ – it’s clear her girls are at the heart of every choice she makes – including taking up regular exercise.

As a self-confessed latecomer to the fitness party, Tess hired a personal trainer for the first time just three years ago; not to look better, she says (she attributes her slim figure after both births to her fast metabolism, running around after her girls, and breast-feeding – ‘you can literally feel your uterus contracting... it’s like natural liposuction’) – but to live a longer, healthier life.



## FIT FOR WORK

'All my adult life, I've worked in media that demand you maintain your shape. For example, when you're in the fashion industry, if you don't fit the sample sizes, you're not going to get booked for jobs. So I've always looked after myself to a degree,' she explains. 'But becoming a parent made me realise I wanted to be around for as long as possible for my children. To be fit and healthy so I can meet my grandchildren. I've been very fortunate that I've enjoyed good health thus far, and I want to maintain that. So, once the girls got more independent and I started doing less lifting of babies, I started thinking about getting fit.'

Being the kind of person who could 'easily find 10 things that seem higher in priority than going to the gym', Tess admits her resolution could quickly fall by the wayside if she didn't pay for her twice-weekly training sessions in advance. 'If my trainer, Sam, is waiting for me in an agreed time and place tapping his watch because I'm three minutes late, I feel guilty if I'm not there ready and keen.'

So did she not go into the training with any kind of body goals, then? 'Well, I did want to tone up my arms. Mine have always been lean, but I've never had any muscle tone with it because I never exercised,' she confesses. 'I wanted definition to look good in the summer, and for wearing dresses on Saturday nights. Do you remember Linda Hamilton in *Terminator 2*? That scene where she's doing pull-ups? She was my early arm idol – although obviously, I haven't gone that far!'

Toned limbs aside, Tess credits her PT with completely re-strengthening her body (in particular, her lower back and pelvis) through lots of dedicated core work. 'I've got a long body, and after having children, and lifting and carrying them on my hips everywhere, it finally took its toll,' she says.

## WALKING TALL

'But I don't feel weak anymore, which I love! Although I don't love all the dreaded bloody lunges and split squats!'

When we remark that all that core work can also have a great effect on posture, Tess enthusiastically agrees. 'Yes! So true! It's really improved the way I hold myself. Being tall,' she explains, 'you have a sort of forgiving posture where you dip your shoulders a bit... you lean towards whoever you're talking to. And that's my job, talking to people and leaning in to connect with them. So I was always

## MYBEAUTYHEROES



'I'm religious about my scrubbing. I use mitts and a salt-based scrub every day. Make it yourself at home by adding olive oil to salt or sand. It works better than anything.'

'I use Lancome's Flash Bronzer Self Tan Face Gel (£26 for 50ml; boots.com) every other night on my face after moisturising to wake up with a glow. It's the best product I've found in my life. Try it. You'll never look back.'



'I'm loving Aveda (aveda.co.uk) hair products right now, which are plant-based and chemical-free. I've got really fine hair so they suit my hair type.'



'I take a Vitabiotics Wellwoman multivitamin (vitabiotics.com) every day to give me all the necessary vitamins and minerals I need to support my immune system, skin, hair and nails.'



'Tanned skin hides a multitude of sins, and I'm obsessed with Dove's DermaSpa Summer Revived self-tan moisturisers (£7.69 for 400ml; boots.com). Trust me, I'm a tan expert and it's brilliant. It doesn't smear, stain or smell, and there's zero patchiness – just golden skin that gradually fades.'





stooping with my shoulders forward. But my trainer's taught me how to realign my body, which by the way, also automatically takes 5lbs off your figure.'

While Tess knows that working up a sweat is vital to maintaining good health, she admits yoga is her true fitness passion, because she doesn't actually have to break a sweat while doing it. 'I know I shouldn't say that in this magazine,' she says in hushed tones, 'but I really enjoy the stretching elements. It's great for the mind, your skin, muscle tone, and for massaging your internal organs... but most importantly, I love it because it puts me in the moment. Anything that stops me whirring off into my endless list of things to do is beneficial.'

Does she practise every day? 'Only in a dream world. I struggle to find the time,' says Tess. 'I do it a few times a week with my eldest daughter, either with a candle at night, or in the morning with the sun coming into the room. Yoga works for me.'

Ask Tess if she's ever tried meditation, and you get a decidedly different response. 'I have! I've tried! I'm desperate to be able to meditate, to do it well and make it a part of my day, but I can only concentrate for about three minutes. I'm a doer and

constantly on the go,' she continues. 'People seem to think I'm only busy when *Strictly* is on, but trust me, I'm busy! Whether it's doing the school run, taking the girls to play dates or netball and hockey matches, walking the dogs, looking after our ponies, running into town... and then there's all the charity work, voiceovers and photoshoots. The only time I sit down is when I'm driving, because we live in the Shires and you have to drive everywhere. Even now, it's hard for me to sit still and talk to you. That's not being rude, but I always want to get up and move around.'

## SMART EATING

Bring up the subject of food with Tess, however, and you suddenly discover the thing that truly grounds her in life. When she says she's always had a very healthy relationship with food, you believe her. Her attitude, she thinks, is very much down her Northern, working-class upbringing, where every dinner consisted of meat and three veg, a side plate of buttered white bread and 'gravy with everything', plus a pudding and custard for afters.

'I grew up thinking that food was there to be enjoyed, not just to fuel our bodies,'



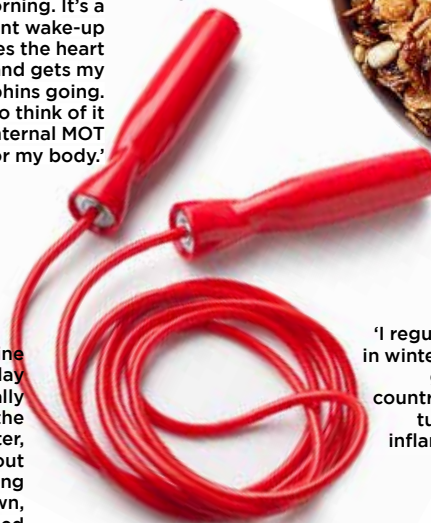
I'M ALWAYS ON A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY WITH FOOD, WHETHER THAT'S THROUGH TRAVELLING, EATING OUT AT RESTAURANTS, OR BUYING A NEW COOKERY BOOK. NOTHING MAKES ME HAPPIER THAN A STRONG CHEESE PLATE AT THE END OF A MEAL.

## MYWELLBEINGTIPS'



'The great thing about having pets is you have to be out in all weathers. It might be cold and rainy, but once you wrap up warm and get outside, everything else disappears from your mind. You can't help but be mindful when you're in the great outdoors.'

'I've really got into skipping at home in the morning. It's a brilliant wake-up call, raises the heart rate and gets my endorphins going. I like to think of it as an internal MOT for my body.'



'I'll share a bottle of wine with Vernon on a Friday night, but I don't really drink during the rest of the week. I drink lots of water, juice and tea throughout the day, and if I'm feeling sluggish or rundown, I'll have cooled boiled water last thing at night to flush out toxins.'



'Breakfast is my favourite meal as it sets me up for the day. I love Greek yoghurt with blueberries, honey and granola. Or wholemeal toast with banana and honey - my trainer told me this is a good power breakfast.'



'I regularly juice, especially in winter, which seems to be getting longer in this country, adding ginger and turmeric for their anti-inflammatory properties.'



says Tess. 'And I'm always on a journey of discovery with food, whether that's through travelling, eating out at restaurants, or buying a new cookery book. Nothing makes me happier than a strong cheese plate at the end of a meal.'

Although Tess always stays mindful to make healthy food choices, preferring to cook with wholefoods, chicken, fish and plenty of vegetables free from additives whenever she can, she admits it would be 'schizophrenic of me to say I won't have a bar of chocolate if I feel like it'. She tells us she's gone sugar-free for the past two weeks, but keep her talking and you soon find out her definition of 'sugar-free' means staying off the Haribo and KitKats. 'It's all about enjoying things in moderation,' she says later. 'I'm not into restricting myself too much when it comes to food because I find it doesn't work if I cut out a food group – I'll just crave it.'

The secret to eating all things in moderation, explains Tess, is portion control. She generally eats little and often, and she'll never eat until she's stuffed. Another reason she avoids overeating is to prevent inflammation in her body. 'If you overload your digestive system, your cells become inflamed, which can affect your immune system and lead to cancer, if coupled with stress. For that reason alone, it makes sense to eat healthily.'

When we remark she seems very well educated on holistic health, and ask if she is interested in alternative



therapies, Tess replies, 'I dip into it. I'm into an Ayurvedic approach to medicine. I'm a big fan of Deepak Chopra and I've been reading up on his work as I'm meeting him soon.'

She's also an ambassador for Vitabiotics Wellwoman supplements. 'It's been great to work with Wellwoman because, for me, they're the best on the market. When I was pregnant, I did a lot of research into what were the best supplements I could take to give the baby everything it needed and Vitabiotic's Pregnacare supplements came out on top, so I took them throughout both pregnancies. I felt healthy, and the kids, so far so good, are healthy too. So I stuck with Vitabiotics and take Wellwoman supplements every day. If something works, you stick by it.' So does her holistic approach translate into the beauty products she uses?

## BEAUTY JUNKIE

'I'm a beauty junkie. I'm not really loyal to any one brand because I'm always finding something new that gives me the desired effects until a make-up artist or hairdresser introduces me to something else. I choose products for their performance, rather than on the merit of their contents. But if something's organic, it's a bonus.'

Tess adds that she's extremely low-maintenance off duty, spending just five minutes on her face in the morning to cleanse, apply a tinted moisturiser, cream blush and lip balm, and curl her eye lashes. When she says she likes 'quick solutions' to her beauty regime, it seems the right time to ask if she would ever consider cosmetic surgery in the future.

'Well, despite being in a business that tends to obsess over looks, I try not to as I think it's really unhealthy. Like everyone else, I have good days and bad days, but I tend not to beat myself up about that. I'm all about the big picture. I mean, I've got wrinkles and it's inevitable they'll get worse, but I'm not ready to go down that line. You can see in the flesh I haven't had any work done because there are wrinkles! But you know what? I embrace it. I'm happy. Life's a journey, right?'

Never a truer word spoken, Tess. □



Tess Daly is Wellwoman ambassador, the UK's no.1 multivitamin for women. Wellwoman is available from Superdrug. Tess wears Sweaty Betty Enliven One Shoulder Knit, £95 (sweatybetty.com); Beach Seventy Six Audrey Mesh Swimsuit, £7770 (seventysix.com)