

HOME DINING RECREATION TRAVEL COMMUNITY HEALTH STYLE

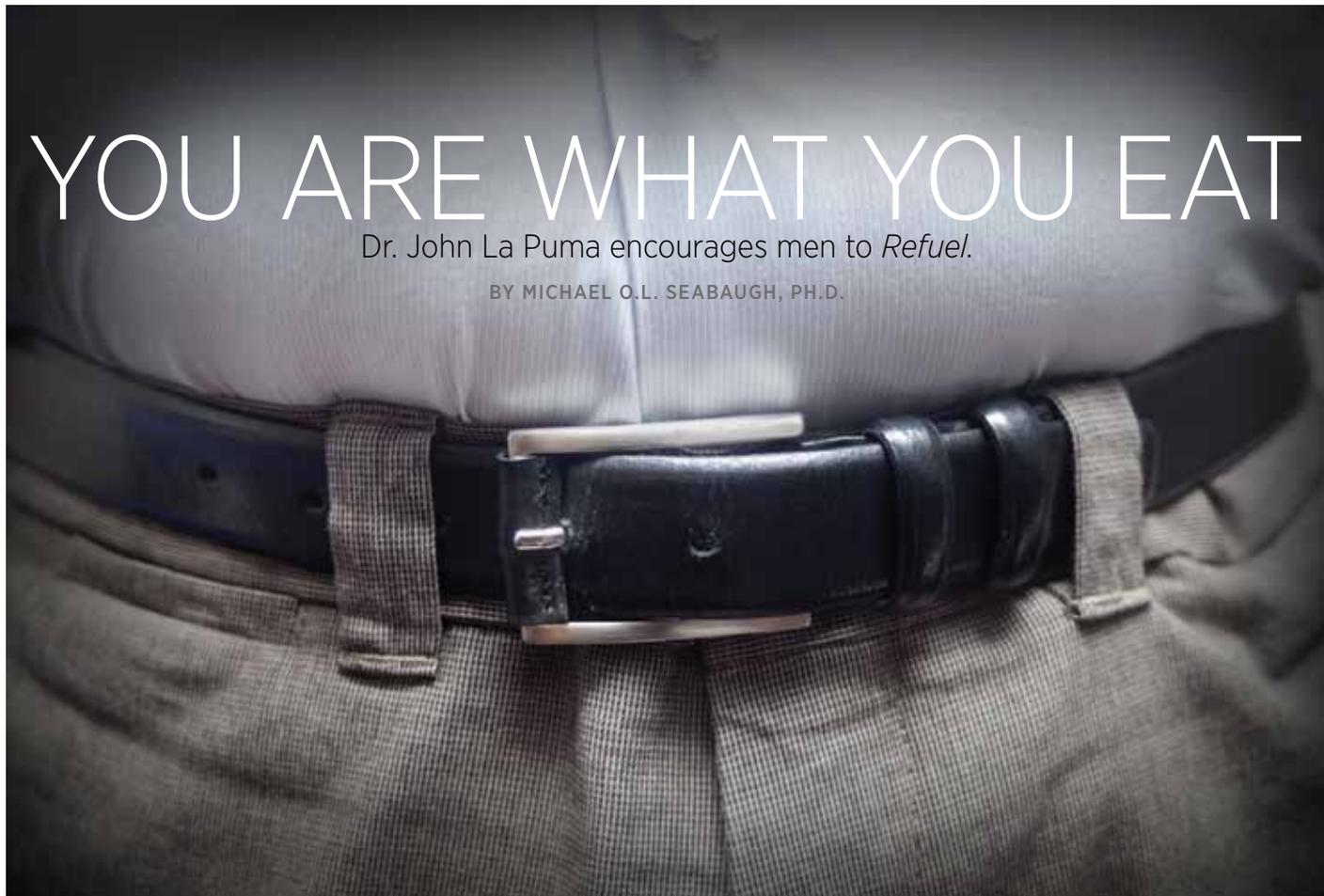
# 805 LIVING

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JUNE 2014

## THE GUYS ISSUE





# YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

Dr. John La Puma encourages men to *Refuel*.

BY MICHAEL O.L. SEABAUGH, PH.D.

**WHEN I CHECKED OUT** the current list of best-selling diet and nutrition books on amazon.com, I found the No. 1 slot going to *The Doctor's Diet*, with a picture of the author, the hunky young chick-bait Dr. Travis Stork, on the cover. In second place was *The Hungry Girl Diet* by Lisa Lillien. No question about it: The diet industry panders almost exclusively to women.



Dr. John La Puma

This supports the contention by Dr. John La Puma that if you are a guy, you are flying solo and at your own peril when it comes to diet and weight loss. La Puma might know something about this sort of thing. He is a pioneer in the field of culinary medicine, the host of *Dr. John La Puma's ChefMD Shorts* on PBS, and a Santa Barbara physician who specializes in weight control. In his recently published book *Refuel* (Harmony Books, 2014) he makes this startling claim: "Throughout the United States, nearly three out of four men are at an unhealthy weight. In fact, there are more overweight and obese men in every state than there are overweight and obese women." Furthermore, according to La Puma, the denial men have

toward the health risks of being overweight is despite the fact that excess weight is more dangerous to men than to women. Here are excerpts from a recent conversation I had with La Puma about men's health and his new book.

**JOHN LA PUMA:** Let's face it, men especially don't like the idea of artificial constraint.

**MICHAEL SEABAUGH:** You mean we don't like being told what to do?

Exactly. And most men also have not learned as much as women about the value of food in their bodies, how it affects hormone production and muscle development, how it impacts fertility, stamina, and strength, how it directly affects blood pressure, cholesterol, auto immune disease, back and neck pain, even cancer. So the anticipated pleasure men get from ordering a deep-dish pizza easily overrides any sense they may have that there is a direct effect on pain, or shortness of breath, or work performance.

*Your book certainly addresses men directly, something most diet books don't do.*

Men need a different eating plan approach than women because our physiology, hormonal function, and aging are different. Fundamentally, men need a simpler, more convenient program that is specifically engineered to leverage their metabolic advantages. The best diet is the one you don't know you're on and functions as an operating system. The fact is men typically don't buy diet books because they are directed to women and their concerns, like getting smaller and focusing on nutrients.

*Men are into food, not nutrients, right?*

Yes. Diets often proscribe one macronutrient: They're low carb, low fat, or low protein. But we don't eat nutrients. We eat food. It never really makes sense that if you're eliminating carbs, for example, and you cut out whole-wheat pasta, you're also dumping a little protein and healthy fat.

*I have a friend who has a big round apple-shaped stomach but claims he isn't fat at all because his belly is hard, and he is always challenging me to hit it. After reading your book I am pretty certain he is a bit delusional.*

Belly fat in men is not just a spare tire. It's an extra, hormone-spewing organ that actively converts testosterone to estrogen. If you can pinch the fat, it's just cosmetic and it may hurt your ego, but if it is that hard belly you describe that you see on so many men, you are talking about visceral fat, the kind that is internal and surrounds your organs. This is the kind that can impact your sex drive, energy level, or sleep quality.

*It sounds like losing testosterone might be a problem with overall health.*

Testosterone in men does many good things: It regulates sex drive, improves initiative, lowers body fat, helps build muscle, improves energy level and self-confidence, and creates a strong skeleton and bone strength as well. But there is a problem. More middle-aged men have lower testosterone levels than they did 50 years ago. Obesity, environmental toxins, medication interaction, and sleep deprivation are four leading causes for that drop.

*How about testosterone therapy as a means to increase energy and help burn fat?*

There are problems with those testosterone gels. If a female partner has accidental exposure, it can cause hair growth and upset menstrual cycles; if a child under 5 has accidental exposure, it can cause precocious puberty. Also prescription testosterone appears to cause heart attacks and premature death in some men, not to mention cutting off their own supply [of testosterone], so they're stuck on it for life. It's not the answer for most men. >



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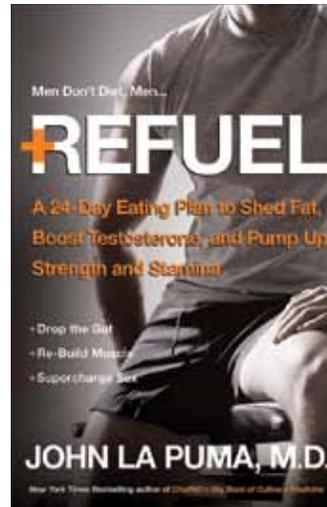
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## MIND BODY SOUL



*Your approach, then, is a non-pharmaceutical-dependent plan to help men “refuel” their testosterone and lose weight?*

Yes, there are several things men can do. First of all, dump the starchy and sugary foods like chips and eat your broccoli. Sugary and starchy foods make men hungrier, increase insulin resistance, and make men store fat internally, where it converts testosterone to estrogen.

Eating cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, and kale will blunt the effects of estradiol, a powerful estrogen, in men's bodies. Drink three liters of citrus water a day and avoid sodas or any liquids with calories. And because men make testosterone at night, we need to get a minimum of six hours [of sleep per night], preferably seven to nine.

*One of the things that I really like about your book is how you tell men to man up in the kitchen, giving them instruction on how and what to cook. You say that for men's health, “the kitchen can become as crucial as the clinic.”*

Yes, and I believe that wholeheartedly. In men whose waists are greater than half their height, their testosterone may be converted by their belly fat into estrogen. The missing link in men's health is not brain or testicle failure, it's overprocessed food and obesity, which causes all kinds of problems men suffer from—fatigue, heart disease, erectile dysfunction. Dr. Oz recently told Jimmy Kimmel that this turns them into girls. I don't believe that. But I do believe that the combo of highly processed substances masquerading as food, plus too little sleep and too many estrogenic toxins, has bulldozed men's health to the side of the road and left it in a ditch to die. ♦

## Are You Man Enough to Face the Facts?

As a man who hangs on to the opinion that I am in good shape when it comes to my weight—despite the five to 10 “extra” pounds that have an unwavering attachment to my body—I believed I was safe until I flunked La Puma's simple test to determine if a guy is overweight. You qualify if your waist is more than half your height. Try it and make sure you actually measure your waist around your belly. You may be surprised, as I was.

—M.S.