

Penelope Cruz's swashbuckling shape up

by Caroline Jones, Daily Mirror 16/05/2011

Johnny Depp's a hard man to upstage, but at this week's premiere of *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*, one woman managed it.

Pirates' newcomer Penelope Cruz stole the show in a Givenchy dress, perfectly framing her enviable cleavage and trim waist. Looking at the 37-year-old's amazing body it's hard to believe she gave birth to her first son, Leo, less than four months ago.

Most new mums hide their bodies under baggy clothes but not Penelope. As she braved the red carpet looking slim and radiant, it wasn't hard to see why the Spanish star topped a poll of the world's most beautiful women last year, and why actor Javier Bardem is such an envied husband.

In the new *Pirates* film, Penelope plays Angelica, an old flame of Depp's character Captain Jack Sparrow, with whom he embarks on a mission to find the fabled Fountain of Youth. But unlike many of her contemporary female stars, Penelope's not on a quest for eternal youth.

"I never want to lie about my age," she says. "If I look around at other actresses I admire, they're all women who haven't fought against growing older, they've embraced it – people like Sophia Loren or Audrey Hepburn."

Refreshingly, Penelope's never followed Hollywood beauty fads and the curvaceous star has taken an active stand against the size zero trend. When guest editing an edition of *French Vogue*, she featured provocative and almost nude shots of size 12 model Crystal Renn.

How she perfected her curves

Unlike many Hollywood health food addicts, Penelope happily admits to the odd indulgence – even on the way to an award ceremony! "I ate a burger and then went on the red carpet," she admits. "I do it, like, once a week. It's my little treat."

The actress credits her curvy figure to sticking to the fish and vegetable-packed meals she grew up with, such as tapas and paella. "I love Spanish food," she explains. "My diet's Mediterranean. I eat well but try to eat healthily."

However, since giving birth she's had to work that little bit harder to regain her figure and has reportedly been following the high-protein Dukan diet.

Penelope's lifelong love of dance has also helped to ensure that her muscles soon snapped back into shape – she trained as a ballerina from the age of four to 18.

"I love ballet and dancing. It's a little boring for me to go to the gym because I'm used to dancing. It's really hard but much more fun," she says.

Her trainer Gunnar Peterson encourages her to use kettlebells to improve her strength, posture and flexibility, and she learned to sword fight on set.

However, her final secret weapon is to simply get more shut-eye! "Sleep is the best way to happiness and beauty," she says. "My record is 18 hours!"

Penelope's food rules

1. Have treats

Why it works: Studies show banning 'naughty' foods makes dieting more likely to fail as you crave them and end up bingeing.

Try it: Pick one day to ditch the diet and eat what you want.

2. Head for the Med

Why it works: Countless studies show that following a traditional Mediterranean diet keeps you slimmer – and protects against heart disease.

Try it: Eat more fish, beans, olive oil, fruit and vegetables.

3. Protein power

Why it works: The French Dukan diet is a high-protein diet similar to Atkins, but the focus is on low-fat protein. This makes your body produce ketonic cells that are an effective appetite suppressant.

Try it: Eat fewer carbs and lean proteins like fish and low-fat dairy.

4. Sleep easy

Why it works: Studies, including one published this year in the *International Journal of Obesity*, have shown that lack of sleep can slow down your metabolism.

Try it: Aim for six to eight hours each night. Many people find following a bedtime ritual helps – a hot bath, then a warm drink and some light reading in bed.

5. Love food

Why it works: Don't think of food as bad – it's fuel and one of life's pleasures. Associating it with guilt can lead you to cycles of overeating and purging. Try it: Look forward to your mealtimes and savour them.



Penelope Cruz (Pic: Getty Images)