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“I felt like myself again. The cloud lifted because I was moving again, but I also found a renewed passion for cooking.”



CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE PAGE: Katherine Cobbs' CrossFit exercise regimen started her on a path to wellness. She has adopted a new diet, which includes giving up milk and grain while eating a variety of meat, produce and healthy fats and oils. She will launch CookFit.com later this year in an effort to educate others on the food and fitness lessons she's learned.

The Author

Katherine Cobbs is a food and lifestyle writer who has contributed to numerous magazines, including *Southern Living*, *Southern Accents*, *Cottage Living*, *Cooking Light* and *San Francisco* magazine. She has collaborated on books with renowned chefs, including: "Frank Stitt's Southern Table," "Frank Stitt's Bottega Favorita," "The Hot & Hot Fish Club Cookbook" with Chris Hastings and as editor on the recently released "Cooking in Everyday English" with Todd English. She resides in Birmingham with her husband, John, and their three daughters.

Holistic Health

One writer's exercise journey carried her to fitness and a new career path.

BY KATHERINE COBBS
PHOTOS BY BRIAN FRANCIS

FOOD EDITOR. FORTY-ONE. FUNK. In the fall of 2010, I was working in a fast-paced creative job with lots of milestones and deadlines that meant working every minute at the office, then at home, while squeezing in time for my girls and husband. We ate what I then considered a healthy, varied diet. But I had let my exercise routine falter and the muffintop I carried around was not a baked good. Delicious, daily tastings in the test kitchens at work didn't help. No matter how small a bite one takes of a dozen Christmas desserts, the result is a carb coma. Do this five days a week and remain sedentary, and a price will be paid.

At almost 6-feet, I'd always been lean, so as the number on the scale crept up and the buttonhole and button on my pants grew farther apart, my funk ballooned. I knew I was doing it to myself. A casual runner for years, I'd run races, including the St. Jude Memphis Marathon. Running kept me in shape through recipe developing, testing and working on chef cookbooks. Yet, during this period in my life, I couldn't motivate myself to hit the pavement.

In September 2010, a friend told me she'd joined the local gym IronTribe Fitness. I considered CrossFit, the fitness program IronTribe teaches, something for serious weight lifters, Navy SEALs and Marines, not something an average mom would voluntarily undertake. For weeks my friend recapped her workouts. They sounded intense and I was flabbergasted by

their short duration—8 minutes, 15 minutes, never more than 45. She seemed empowered, and her excitement was contagious. It was the kick in the pants I needed. I signed up for the next month's 101 Class and began a journey that would not only restore my fitness but also change my view of the foods we eat.

CrossFit focuses on "constantly varied, high intensity, functional movements." At IronTribe, we perform short intervals of challenging moves that replicate those used in everyday life. Deadlifts mimic picking up a sofa. Running down the street with a med ball is reminiscent of running after a 2 year old while nine months pregnant. These challenging moves get you fit for what life throws you.

There is also a dietary philosophy that is more about lifestyle than weight loss, though the latter will occur if you are dedicated to the former. After a 40-day Paleo Challenge—eating an exclusively "caveman" diet—my before-and-after blood work comparison was impres-

sive, and I'd lost inches too. I felt like myself again. The cloud lifted because I was moving again, but I also found a renewed passion for cooking.

As a classically trained cook, the arsenal of ingredients I had at my fingertips consisted of meats and game, a cornucopia of vegetables and fruits, healthy fats and oils, and a variety of nuts. This made cooking easy and options endless. Giving up milk and grain, which studies have shown raise levels of inflammation in our bodies, was more difficult. I never realized how heavily I relied on pasta and rice in my cooking. But, as I replaced the grains with more vegetables to complement the meat and healthy fat on my plate, I felt more alert after meals and less hungry throughout the day.

Inspired, I began to read voraciously—New York Times' science writer Gary Taube's book "Why We Get Fat," Dr. William Davis, M.D.'s book "Wheat Belly" and Robb Wolfe's "Paleo Solution"—and the more I learned, the more I

wanted to turn my focus to sharing with others. I wanted to teach the world how to "CookFit."

Eating this way is not about deprivation. If I'm at Bettola, I will eat pizza. If I'm at Continental Bakery, there is an almond croissant with my name on it. I look at it like this: Most of us love something—cheesecake, beer, potato chips—but we don't eat or drink these things exclusively or even partake of them at every meal. To be fit both on the inside and out, we must make the best choice most of the time. I choose to eat an optimal diet and keep moving more often than not. I'll also choose the croissant and enjoy a Saturday being lazy without guilt. Mostly, I am passionate about a new way to eat and have plans to share it with others through CookFit.com, a brand and website I hope to launch early this year. CookFit.com will show how delicious and simple it can be to eat the foods that are the ideal fuel for our bodies and, as a result, can improve health well beyond our expectations. ■