

Following the Photo Trail: Truly Healthy Celebrities After 40

Let's face it: the majority of celebrities have a leg up in the looks department. But being born beautiful doesn't mean you stay that way. The damage the body accumulates over time from poor food choices and an excessive use of substances like cigarettes, alcohol, and/or drugs (both recreational and pharmaceutical) can only be disguised with special effects for so long.

Then there are those celebrities who seem to get better looking as they age, prompting countless people to ask, "How do they do it?" Some of Hollywood's finest have realized that the only way to keep what your momma gave you is through regular exercise and, most importantly, an exemplary diet.

Meryl Streep



Instantly recognizable, Meryl Streep has been appearing in plays, movies, and television since the 1970s. What's not so well known is her advocacy for organic, local food. Meryl was the founder of a food co-op and CSA when she lived in Connecticut as well as Mothers and Others, a campaign calling for tougher pesticide residue standards. She is meticulous about reading labels and finding the food she eats from trusted sources. Though not a vegetarian, she makes tries to eat less meat and to find grass-fed, organic beef. Her formidable talent is the reason she's a fixture in prestige pictures, but the fact that she has retained her looks with only a slight luminous softening can be attributed to the smart choices she makes in

regards to the food she consumes. Maybe the ketogenic diet had something to do with it?

Lenny Kravitz



Oh, Lenny. A rock star, sex symbol, and renaissance man, he released his first album in 1989. The years since then are the only indication that Lenny is actually aging, as his face remains ever the same. But how? Working out is an important piece in every healthy lifestyle, but that alone doesn't account for over 25 years of looking fantastic. His secret? Listening to his body.

A vegetarian for 15 years, he then transitioned eating grass-fed, organic meat after he felt his body needed it. Now he focuses on fish (especially as he lives in the Bahamas for much of the year) and vegetables, often from his own organic farm. To round that out, Lenny never goes anywhere without his juicer. He might enjoy a decadent, outrageous cheat every once in awhile, but he knows that staying and looking healthy is about focusing on quality, organic food, especially vegetables.

Jared Leto



Actor Jared Leto is a well-known vegan (or "cheagan") who's transformed his body for various roles over the years, a practice that's given him a unique perspective on how food affects the body. While his Oscar-winning role required him to whittle down to under 120 pounds, another of his jobs required him to gain 67 pounds, which he accomplished through binge-eating foods like giant pizzas. Years of eating well left his body

unprepared to deal with the weight, and he experienced problems with his feet and was at one point even using a wheelchair. The experience left Jared more committed to a healthy, active lifestyle, and it's the reason why the changes to his face between now and the mid-1990s have been so minimal.

Susan Sarandon



We've been seeing more of Susan Sarandon in the news lately, whether celebrating the 25th anniversary of her film *Thelma and Louise* or professing her unabashed love for presidential candidate Bernie Sanders. A woman unafraid to speak her mind, she's also a fantastic advertisement for the benefits of taking care of yourself. She's credits her exemplary outsides to her insides. A vegetarian for a period of time, she now prefers to eat a diet of antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables while limiting red meat, carbs, and refined grains. Susan found that avoiding smoking and drinking alcohol while focusing on eating well, exercising regularly, and practicing deep breathing and visualization has translated to her looking and feeling her best. Yes, the outside reflects the in. It's no wonder she looks better than ever.

Lucy Liu



Determining Lucy Liu's age through photos alone is impossible. While she takes advantage of moisturizers, oils, and plants like aloe vera to protect her skin, she also credits what she eats for the longevity of her looks. Drinking lots of water and eating lots fresh fruits and vegetables is the easiest way to take care of your skin. Gluten-free for a while, Lucy takes a

common sense approach to her health, with occasional treats but a focus on eating fresh foods balanced with an exercise regimen and meditation. She makes smart choices when it comes to her health as well as her career. You never know where she'll show up next...but she will look gorgeous.

Jennifer Lopez



She's been a fly girl, a dancer, singer, and an actress (among other things), and she's looked damn good the entire time. People who work with Jennifer Lopez, from directors to peers to trainers, all eventually mention one thing: this woman is disciplined. That same discipline is evident in her diet. She snacks on fruits and vegetables, focuses on eating lean meats and nutrient dense foods, and avoids processed foods, fueling her body with the best quality, organic food she can find. Jennifer has always been active, from sports in high school to her years as a dancer to her current commitment to working out. She pairs that activity with an eating regimen that includes salads, other veggies, whole grains, and lean meats. Her lifestyle has allowed her to stay fit and glowing since her first movie role in 1986. It's easy for Jenny from the Block to remember where she came from when her face in the mirror hasn't really changed.

Tilda Swinton



An artsy, oddball chameleon capable of disappearing into a role, Tilda Swinton's distinctive looks render her immediately recognizable no matter her hairstyle or age. She does things on her own terms, and she credits good genes, luck of the draw, and her lifestyle in the Scottish highlands. While the

first two are definitely factors, her life in Scotland has her cooking vegetables she grows herself and eating eggs from her own chickens. She's not forthcoming with the details of her diet, but then she wouldn't be the mysterious Tilda we know and love if she revealed too many details. All we know is that she likes to keep it simple. It's clear from looking at the numerous photos of her from her collaborations over the years, that her choices and easy-going lifestyle have left her radiant.

Angela Bassett



Stella got her groove back 18 years ago, but it's plain to see Angela Bassett never really lost hers. Since her career got going in the nineties, Angela has always maintained that diet is more important than exercise in keeping herself in top shape. Her diet is similar to the Paleo program, with organic lean protein and non-starchy vegetables. She also stays away from processed foods, grain, and sugar. That doesn't mean she's willing to sacrifice taste though. Angela tries to keep it interesting by choosing flavorful and passionate food. She especially emphasizes eating non-starchy veggies, and you can tell that she's willing to put in the work to be as healthy and happy as she can be.

Jason Mraz



He isn't quite over 40, and he's only been in the public eye for 15 years or so. But when it comes to eating well and making smart, healthy choices, Jason Mraz is doing some pretty cool stuff. He eats locally whenever possible, travels with his Vita-mix for green smoothies, uses soap and vinegar to manage pests on his

avocado farm, and sells the fruits of his labor to Chipotle while donating leftover avocados to local food banks. Mostly vegan after supporting a bandmate with diabetes in trying a vegetarian and raw diet, he makes an exception for eggs from the chickens that provide the fertilizer for his farm. He's also a big fan of yoga. Hippie much? Yup! Jason is the perfect example of someone who saw what a difference eating well and being healthy can do and took control of his food chain to ensure that he's eating is the best quality. The proof is in the chocolate avocado pudding (grown on your own avocado farm, of course).

Who Else Is Out There?

We're never going to know exactly what celebrities eat. Most of the interviews about diet, especially for actresses, talk about how they only eat this or that...but then they mention they still indulge in some particular treat once in awhile in a somewhat vague attempt at relatability. We're definitely not getting the whole story. For every interview that claims he or she is eating salmon and quinoa salad, there are most likely a hundred different things happening healthwise behind the scenes.

Obviously, genetics play a role here. Some actors are so humble that's all they will ever attribute their good looks too. But that humility minimizes the importance of diet and how the choices they make help maintain their appearance. We are biologically wired to find healthy people more attractive. Makeup and plastic surgery can only hide so many unhealthy choices. Good food means healthy skin, eyes, teeth, and nails, and it gives a person an indefinable aura.

These celebrities are by no means the only celebrities who choose to eat properly, but they are some of the rich and famous who've surpassed expectations through the years of being in the public eye. When you see someone on the screen

who looks years younger than they actually are, there are probably some serious health stories behind it. Who's your favorite?

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Sources

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- *Susan Sarandon Defies Hollywood by Aging Gracefully and in Great Health* – webmd.com
- *Skin Deep: Lucy Liu Shares Her Personal Anti-Aging Routine* – futureofpersonalhealth.com
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- *Angela Bassett's Secret: You Have to keep it Interesting* – blackdoctor.org
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