

Stars STYLE

MELINA KANAKAREDES

Gorgeous Greek-American actress Melina Kanakaredes spent four years on the daytime drama *Guiding Light* before leaving to pursue other acting opportunities. After a brief stint on *NYPD Blue*, a couple of movie roles (*White Man's Burden*, *Rounders*) and a short-lived TV series (*New York News*), the 32-year-old hit pay dirt: the starring role on the new hit series *Providence*, about a plastic surgeon who leaves her successful L.A. practice to return home to Rhode Island. Hard to believe, but Melina's good looks sometimes held her back in Hollywood. "For the longest time I was the odd-looking girl: too ethnic, too this, too that," says Melina. "People saw my last name and said, 'Oh, definitely ethnic.'"



DIET
Melina, who is married to fellow Greek-American Peter Constantinides, loves to cook dishes from her parents' native country, like *tropita* (cheese omelet), *spanakopita* (spinach in phyllo dough), *assaka* (an eggplant and ground beef casserole), Greek-style oven-browned potatoes, and baklava. Other favorite foods include *tsipouro* with vodka sauce, barbecued ribs, seafood, chocolate and caramels from Melina's uncle's candy store in Akron, Ohio. "If a box of baklava is in the house and it's open, I have to eat it," she confesses. Melina and Peter are always on picnics, particularly when they are vacationing in Europe. "We like getting fresh bread, a bottle of wine, and some cheese and apples."



WARDROBE
"I always fun to play dressup," says Melina, who admits that her worst spending vice is shoes. But frilly nighties are not her thing: Melina much prefers to wear her husband's boxers to bed (she also wears them to the gym). The curvy star favors tank-style tops and dresses and she loves the new burnt velvet fabric. She also likes raw silk, the material that her wedding gown was made of. "It was simple," she says of her gown. "It was me."



EXERCISE
Being the main character in a one-hour weekly series doesn't leave much time for the StairMaster, though Melina gets to the gym as often as possible. Her preferred way of burning calories, however, is not in the weight room; it's in the water. "I love to swim; I'm just addicted to it," says the actress, who swims at a private club near her San Fernando Valley home. "I do it for as long as I can stand the chlorine in my hair." And Melina isn't doing the doggie paddle — she's an accomplished synchronized swimmer.



BEAUTY
Cosmetician L. Duane Sevelin calls Melina "a makeup artist's dream because her skin is very beautiful and her eyes are very beautiful; just giving her a little help is enough." The 5-foot 7-inch green-eyed beauty was the 1986 Miss Columbus, Ohio, and the first runner-up in that year's Miss Ohio contest. Melina is proud of her long, curly brown hair, even though she once flirted with the idea of short, blonde hair by trying on a wig. "I didn't think I was the same person," the actress recalls. "I was tossing my hair. I was doing all kinds of weird things. A little Marilyn Monroe came out." Despite her access to the toniest hairstylists in Hollywood, Melina says she's better at doing her own hair than anyone else. The one beauty item Melina can't live without? Noxzema cleansing cream. "When I was in college, all the girls would say, 'So, Melina, what do you use? The Chanel line?' And they'd talk about how they'd spend \$300 on these products. And I'd laugh. I don't care how much money I make, I'll always use Noxzema."