

A combination of a healthy diet and endurance sports saved chef **Ryan Hutmacher's** life.

BY BETHANY LEACH MAVIS



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When Ryan Hutmacher lost a sales job offer after Sept. 11, 2001, he decided to shift his career to the culinary world. After all, cooking in a restaurant had paid his way through his undergrad years, so he jumped in with both feet. He studied culinary arts at Kendall College in Chicago and then moved to France to further his studies through an apprenticeship. At the time, he weighed more than 230 pounds, smoked and had asthma, high cholesterol and high blood pressure. He was even deemed a pre-type 2 diabetic, but the time he spent in France started him on a path to health. "I embraced the way the French people lived," he says.

"I started running, eating natural foods and never deprived myself of cheese, desserts or wine."

When Hutmacher's brother signed him up for a triathlon in 2002, he says, "Triathlon was one of the first things that really changed my life." He started with short-course and competed in the Olympic-distance Chicago Triathlon for four years. He switched over to marathon running, returned to triathlon for a couple of half-iron races and then decided to "kick it up" to the full iron distance. He signed up for the 2009 Ironman Cozumel and dedicated 12 months of training to it. "I knew I was going to finish

because that was the most committed I had ever been," he says.

In 2005, Hutmacher co-founded Chicago-based Centered Chef Food Studios, a health and wellness-oriented culinary firm. The business caters to people with

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"restricted lifestyles," individuals with food allergies, busy professionals or people struggling with obesity. The various services provided by Centered Chef include educational programming at corporations, consultation for food service companies and specialty catering. In February, he's also opening the Centered Chef Culinary Wellness Institute in Chicago's West Loop that features educational programming and a test kitchen. Hutmacher describes his cooking style as "clean, simple and sexy. Clean because it's not fake foods, simple because it's not too many ingredients and sexy because it looks good when you plate it."

Since founding Centered Chef, Hutmacher has lost 50 pounds and embraced the active lifestyle. The business keeps Hutmacher busy and sometimes working long days, but he still strives to maintain balance in his life. "I try to be the 'Centered Chef,'" he says. 📍

[CHICAGO SPOTLIGHT]

Hutmacher's Favorite...

Places to swim: the health club or open-water swimming in Lake Michigan near the Navy Pier

Places to bike: along the lakefront in Madison, Wis., on the Ironman Wisconsin bike course, a 90-minute drive. "For distance and hills, it's where the purists in Chicago train."

Places to run: The 20 to 30 miles of running trails around Lake Michigan

Local races: Chicago Triathlon, Leon's World's Fastest Triathlon

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Spinach Basil Pesto Pasta with Sautéed Shrimp

Hutmacher likes this recipe because it's a "beautiful, vibrant pasta dish" that can be enjoyed hot or cold. The walnut contains omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids and some fiber, and he pairs it with shrimp because it complements the flavors of the pasta and pesto and because it's a great source of protein that's not too heavy the night before morning training.

Ingredients

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| Pesto | 12 oz. whole-wheat pasta |
| 10 oz. baby spinach | 1 tbsp. olive oil |
| 1 cup basil | 1 lb. shrimp (21-25 pieces), raw, peeled and deveined |
| 2 tbsp. walnuts, toasted | Salt and pepper to taste |
| 3 roasted garlic cloves | ¼ tsp. cayenne |
| ¼ cup olive oil | 1 lemon, cut into wedges |
| ½ cup Parmesan cheese, grated | ½ cup kalamata olives |
| | ½ cup sun-dried tomatoes |
| | ¼ cup Parmesan cheese shavings for garnish |

Directions

Prepare the pesto: Prepare an ice bath by filling a bowl with cold water and ice, leaving enough room for the spinach. Heat a large pot of water to boiling. Season the water with salt. Add the spinach and blanch for about 30 seconds. Using a slotted spoon, remove the spinach from the boiling water and plunge into the ice bath. Remove the spinach and squeeze out the excess moisture. Repeat with the basil. Keep the water on the stove and bring back to a boil. In a blender or food processor, add the nuts and garlic and pulse a few times. Add the ¼ cup olive oil and continue to pulse. Add the spinach, basil, cheese and salt and pulse until just combined. Season to taste and reserve.

Prepare the pasta: Once the water has returned to a boil, add the pasta and cook according to package directions. When al dente, drain—do not rinse—and place in a large bowl. Add the pesto while the pasta is still warm and toss to coat, thinning the pesto with cooking water if necessary.

Prepare the shrimp: Heat 1 tbsp. olive oil in a large non-stick or cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Sprinkle shrimp with salt, pepper and cayenne. Add to skillet and sauté until shrimp are opaque in center, about 3 minutes. Sprinkle with fresh lemon juice.

Garnish: Garnish the dressed pasta with the olives, sun-dried tomatoes, Parmesan cheese and shrimp. Enjoy!

Nutritional info (per serving): 430 calories, 11.6 g total fat, 2.2 g saturated fat, 58.2 g carbohydrates, 25.8 g protein, 7.4 g fiber, 24% calories from fat.