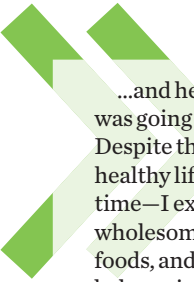


# Taking The Cure

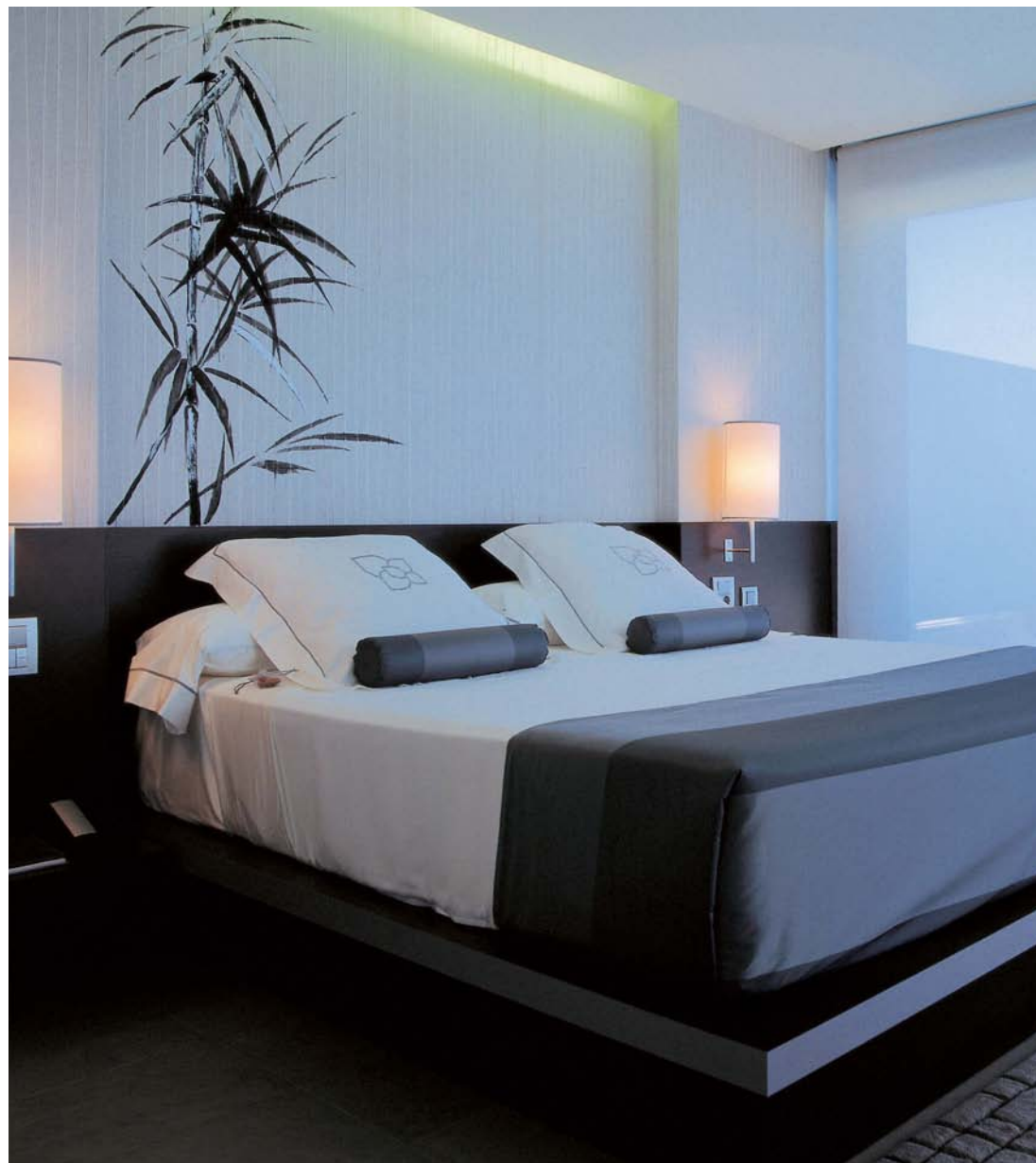
Can one week at the world's most chic detox clinic reset your body and help cure you from the ailments of an overly stressed-out, run-down and hectic modern lifestyle? We went there to find out...

*By Yi-Hwa Hanna*



...and here I was thinking I was going to starve to death. Despite the fact that I've lived a healthy lifestyle for quite some time—I exercise often, eat wholesome and nutritious foods, and try to maintain a balance in my life—I've always struggled with the concept, or more so the implementation, of a detox programme, especially when it comes to food. So when I was invited to head to SHA Wellness Clinic, one of the world's most highly rated wellness centres, along with a small group of people each seeking a cure for their own ailments, I was more than a little apprehensive about just how hungry I'd be when I got there. In fact, in the name of honesty, I suppose this is the point at which I need to admit that I snuck into SHA with some contraband: I had packed a sneaky little bag full of my favourite granola bars into my suitcase. They were healthy, I rationalised, and it was only in case of emergency.

Being the planner that I am, I began the week leading up to my SHA visit with a personal cleanse. I started cutting back on caffeine—at the time, my heavy workload and lack of sleep saw me on at least four coffees a day, which I always take plain black with no sugar or milk. I found it painfully tough. I was tired every day, and had to consciously resist the lure of my “black gold” to keep myself awake. Most of my wellness-focused escapes centre around a very physical itinerary: As someone who just truly loves to exercise, my fast-paced lifestyle always sees me trying to pack in as much activity as I possibly can, and while this approach has left me pretty strong, when you look at the overall picture of health, I was pretty run down. And then there's the stress factor: With immense amounts of pressure from both my working and personal life, I had to admit to myself that my



## I had to admit to myself that my *quarterly crashes were more than a weekend duvet day, and see them for what they were: burnout.*

quarterly crashes were more than just a weekend craving for a duvet day, and see it for what it was: burnout. Now that I'm on the other side of 30, I had to stop pretending that my crazy fast-paced lifestyle was a healthy way to live. I may not have been going to achieve help with my weight loss goals, like many other guests that head to SHA, but from an overall wellness and health perspective, I was the perfect candidate for it.

### A Spanish Ecapade

Just a one-hour drive from the Alicante airport, SHA's location alone is worth writing home about: Set high in the hilltops, its view of the southeastern coastline of Spain's Costa Blanca—half of the rooms overlook the quaint and picturesque town of Albir, while the other half boast a stunning view of the Playa del Albir and its sun-drenched blue waters—is enough to make you feel instantly relaxed.

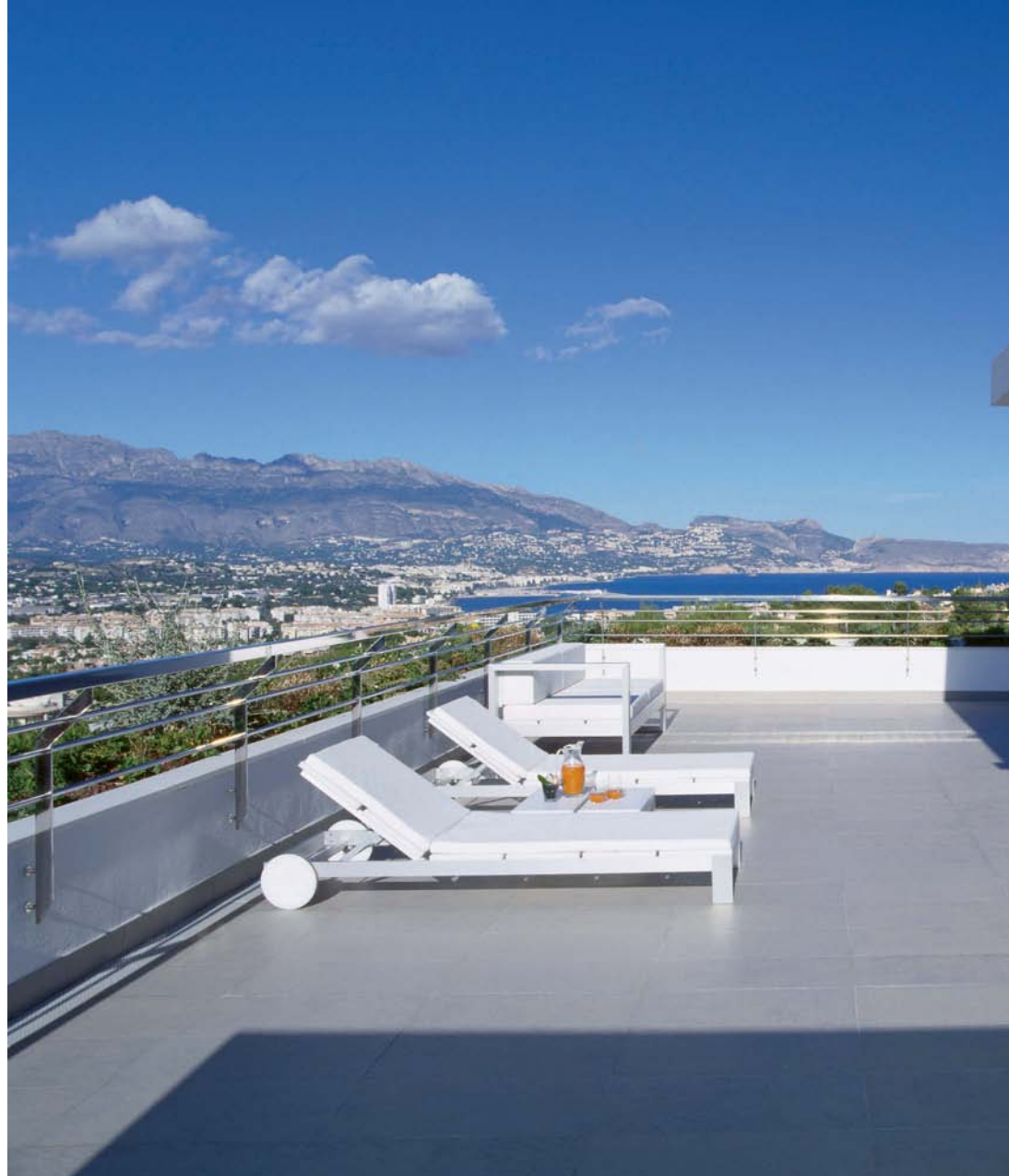
The hotel's decor, in clean and minimal tones of white, are fresh and so stylish they were reminiscent of a chic fashion haunt in Ibiza. But rather than encourage you to party hard in your finest togs, instead, here guests are encouraged to let their hair down—quite literally. Each room is furnished with a plush bathrobe that you can wear all around the resort, at any time, even mealtimes (barring dinner). After you've checked in, one of the first



things on your itinerary is a check-in with your docs. With everything from more traditional medical doctors to aesthetic therapists, fitness consultants and even holistic therapists, one of SHA's most unique selling points is that it manages to, create a harmonious coming together of both Eastern and Western medicine and wellness. A family-run place, the origins of SHA are attributed to a personal story of health transformation. Alfredo Bataller, SHA's founder, was diagnosed with a tumour. Frustrated with his seemingly endless visits to various doctors, each telling him a different diagnosis, he heard about the macrobiotic diet. Bataller figured he had nothing to lose by giving it a try, and as the story goes, within a couple of months, he found himself totally cured. It was then that the family's determination to share their new knowledge led to SHA being born. Within my little group, each of us had our own mission: One, to sort out her digestive issues, another to lose weight, and me, to learn how to de-stress (and see the true impact it was having on my health), as well as figure out what exactly I could do to excel further in sport.

### Treating Myself

My health consultations were sobering, to say the least. Both the "Western" and "Eastern" approaches concluded the same thing: I had to severely reduce the stress levels in my life, or I was going to wind up with some truly ugly results. My chronically elevated cortisol levels, a direct result of my stress, were messing with my hormone balance, and as a result, my skin was breaking out or worse, breaking into the occasional rash that even saw my skin suffering from depigmentation. My stress was also responsible for my lack of sleep, which was a big problem: Not only was it a direct



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contributor to undue weight gain, it also meant that I couldn't perform my best elsewhere in my life. I was prescribed some stress balancing supplements, and warned that I needed to make some severe changes to balance out the yin and yang energies in my lifestyle lest my quarterly burnouts lead to something a lot more permanent. Fortunately, what I was prescribed while at SHA was a lot more pleasant: Relaxation therapies, hydrotherapy and

beauty treatments that would help me treat my body with more respect. SHA offers a range of cutting-edge beauty treatments such as Shrinking Violet, LPG, Velashape and more, all designed to help tone and firm the face and body, all with instant results. While I initially scoffed at some—the presotherapy, which involves wearing a bodysuit from the torso down that pulses with pressure to help reduce cellulite and boost circulation, made me feel as though I was

being sucked on by an anaconda—when I got back to my room and inspected the results, I couldn't help but admit I saw a noticeable difference in the tightness of my skin. Most impressively, the Indiba left me with an instant glow and more toned appearance, while the Physia facial—designed to encourage cellular regeneration—was so effective on my dark under-eye circles I didn't even need to wear concealer and my wrinkles had actually



smoothed out. Next came my fitness assessment: Probably my favourite part of the trip—after all, this was my comfort zone—even here I learned something new. My instructor instantly pointed out the troubles in my knee, and gave me a challenging workout designed to improve my stability that I found so effective (and so much fun!) I've continued doing it since I've come home. In between treatments and workouts, which took up the majority of my days, my companions and I often met in the hydrotherapy circuit area, where we could steam and bathe ourselves to our heart's content. It was interesting to hear why each of them sought refuge at SHA.

### Re-Educating Myself

Outside of the clinic, much to my surprised, mealtimes became a genuine highlight. No menu is repeated over a two week period, and each day was an absolute delight. I was thrilled to find that not only was I not starving, the food was, in fact, delicious. The macrobiotic diet is vastly different from how I normally eat: With a huge focus on grains and vegetables and very little animal protein, the first couple of days were an adjustment. As tasty as the meals were, I found myself bloating, and concerned that it was actually making me gain weight. Meals were anything but boring: We enjoyed everything from seitan burgers and prawns atop mushroom

risotto, juicy seabass with pureed sweet potato and endless vegetable foams. Oh, and I didn't wind up needing a single granola bar. I was so hung up on the initial bloating—which I later realised was likely due to the sudden increase in my fibre intake, thanks to all of the grains and greens—I didn't notice that my skin was starting to clear, my eyes were a little bit brighter, and my digestion was turning into a speedy, well-oiled machine. By the time we left, I felt clean as a whistle, with boundless energy, regardless of how little sleep I'd had—and the sleep I did have, was deep and sedative, a joyful change from the broken shut-eye I'd become accustomed to at home. While SHA isn't cheap, nor could I stay there forever (or cook like its macrobiotic chefs forever), I think the most valuable part of my stay there was the education. I came home with a renewed understanding of and respect for my body, and since being home, I've stuck to my severely decreased caffeine levels, and started paying more attention to the kinds of foods I'm putting in my body. I've found new inspiration for my healthy meals that have made me excited to cook more each

night, adding in vegetables in ways I hadn't considered before, and I'm less afraid to approach grains and carbohydrates in general. The boost in my energy levels, both from my fresher diet and better quality of sleep, have seen me perform better than I have in long time when it comes to sport, and I feel like I'm finally starting to understand how to listen to my body better, to fuel it to run at its best. As I learned during my stay, the principle of macrobiotics isn't just about the food, it's about your approach to your lifestyle, and finding a balance between yin and yang. While I couldn't stick to a solely macrobiotic diet in the long run, the lessons I learned from the way food is approached there have already had a considerable effect on both my overall health and my waistline—my skin is smoother than it has been in months, and I'm finally starting to push past my long-standing plateau in terms of physical changes from exercise. My new yin and yang attitude has made me even more aware of the importance of balance between my physical and mental state. If my body had a reset button, SHA was just the switch-on it needed. ■



## A Taste of SHA

One of the most raved-about aspects of SHA Wellness Clinic, whether from guests staying at the hotel or drop-in diners, is its cuisine. The resort focuses on a macrobiotic principle—one of the main inspirations behind the founder's desire to open this haven, thanks to its undeniable impact on his health—and using seasonal ingredients with an emphasis on vegetables and grains, and avoiding dairy, red meat and poultry. Here's a taste of their gourmet cuisine, straight from their kitchens to yours...

### VEGETABLE TEMPURA

Rich in vitamins and minerals, especially when they're freshly consumed, vegetables are an excellent food, particularly since they're low in fat and calories too. But sometimes, you just want a little more pizzazz when you're in the mood for a veggie dinner—with this recipe, you don't have to sacrifice on texture and taste, since it's a healthier alternative to the average vegetable tempura you'll find on many menus. SHA uses rice flour to create this, and a potpourri of different vegetables, since this makes for the most tasty and healthful combination. According to the SHA experts, onions are rich in vitamins A and C, and are said to help with respiratory affections, while red peppers contain vitamin B6 and magnesium, which helps to combat anxiety and insomnia. Meanwhile, SHA's boffins claim that green peppers help boost our sight, skin and respiratory system, helping to reduce cold symptoms and fighting

constipation and hypothyroidism, while courgette's high fibre levels are great for digestion and weight loss. SHA includes carrots thanks to their natural diuretic properties, while lombard is said to be rich in folic acid—all this is fried up in whole wheat rice flour, which is gluten-free.

**100g onion**  
**100g red pepper**  
**100g green pepper**  
**100g courgette**  
**100g carrot**  
**100g lombard**  
**75g rice flour**  
**50g arrowroot**  
**15ml sparkling water**  
**salt and pepper, to taste**  
**5g black sesame**  
**100ml mirin**  
**1g rice syrup**

1. Peel all of the vegetables, julienne them, then put aside.
2. Mix together all of the other ingredients then add in the vegetables.
3. Heat some oil in a deep pan, and once hot, fry some clumps of the vegetable and batter mix in small nests.
4. Let the vegetable nests cool, place on a plate, and serve hot!

**MAKES 10 SERVINGS**



### TUNA TATAKI WITH MUSHROOM RISOTTO

Tuna is an oily fish high in protein and Omega 3s. While those are great, it's also important not to consume this too often since it is also high in mercury, say SHA's experts. According to SHA's team, among tuna's many benefits are the fact that it's high in calcium content, and it also provides important vitamins such as Vitamin A and D. It's also said to help "absorb body fat" in their words, making it a great choice for those seeking weight loss. A tataki, (also called tosa-mi) is a traditional Japanese way of preparing





fish and consists of cutting it into pieces of considerable thickness before searing it on all four sides of each piece, leaving it practically raw inside. Sometimes, to prepare tataki, the fish can be marinated in advance (such as using a mixture of vinegar with a little ground ginger). Here, SHA's team has created a tuna tataki recipe with a mushroom risotto and mirin reduction. A signature dish of many fine dining restaurants, it must be served fresh, right out of the kitchen, so that it keeps its flavour and texture. It can be accompanied with many side dishes like vegetables or legumes but goes especially well with a risotto.

- fresh, sushi-grade ahi tuna**
- 200g mushrooms—using a variety of mixed mushrooms is best**
- 250g brown rice**
- 100 ml of soy cream**
- 1 teaspoon of saffron**
- 50 ml of organic olive oil**
- 100 ml of mirin**
- 5g of rice syrup**
- 25g chives**
- 25g chervil**
- mushroom broth or warm water, to taste, according to desired thickness of the risotto**

1. Begin with the fresh tuna. Ensure it's clean and filleted, then portion it in equal sized strips before cutting it into squares. Place it aside, until you're ready to sear it at the end.
2. To make the mushroom risotto, boil the rice for 30 minutes, then place it into a deep saucepan with the mushroom mix, previously cooked, along with the soy cream, saffron and mushroom broth (or warm water). Let it simmer until the flavours blend nicely and the texture becomes soft and slightly sticky.
3. To make the mirin reduction, pour the mirin into a saute pan along with the rice syrup and let it simmer until it reduces and the syrup crystallizes.
4. Sear the tuna on high heat on each side of each square.
4. To serve, place the mushroom risotto into a bowl, place the tuna tataki on top (still hot!) and garnish with mirin syrup.

**MAKES 4-5 SERVINGS**

### APPLE GAZPACHO WITH CRAB ASPIC AND MINT OIL

While the traditional gazpacho is made with tomato, SHA's chefs decided to try something a little more innovative to keep guests—or in your case, family and friends—surprised. Their alternative, made with apples, is ideal for springtime.

- APPLE GAZPACHO**
- 20g red pepper**
- 20g green pepper**
- 50g peeled garlic**
- 40g cucumber**
- 40g Granny Smith apples, baked and cooled**
- 50g buckwheat bread**
- 20ml water**
- 10ml Extra Virgin Olive Oil**
- 5ml apple vinegar**
- 1ml sherry vinegar**
- 2g salt**

- MINT OIL**
- 10g mint leaves**
- 20ml Extra Virgin Olive Oil**

- TEMPURA**
- 7g arrowroot**
- 10g boiled beetroot**
- 50ml sunflower oil**

- APPLE CLOUD**
- 1g soy lecithine**
- 50g Granny Smith apple**

- CRAB ASPIC**
- 50g buckwheat bread**
- 2g crab**
- 0.1g Pronagar seaweed**
- 0.5ml apple juice**

1. To make the gazpacho, peel and slice all vegetables. Cool for 24 hours. Add vinegar, mix with a Thermomix, and emulsify with oil to obtain a more vivid colour. Add salt, then add in the apples (which should have been previously baked and cooled).
2. To make the mint oil, blanch the leaves then blend with the oil.
3. To make the tempura, blend the beetroot, adding in the arrowroot until you have created a smooth cream. Place the resulting cream into a piping bag. Bring some cooking oil to high heat in a saucepan, then pipe the mixture into the hot oil in thin strips, creating tempura shapes as you fry it.
4. To make the crab aspic, place the crab into the bottom of a mould. Blend the juice with the Pronagar seaweed (agar-agar), and place it in the mould atop the crab. Leave it to set for 1 hour in the fridge.
5. To make the apple cloud, juice the apples, blend it with the soy lecithine, and increase the blender speed until it becomes fluffy and like a cloud.
6. To assemble, place the gazpacho in a bowl, placing the buckwheat bread in the centre. Heat the crab aspic then place it atop the bread. Decorate with tempura strips, then garnish with mint oil. Puff the apple cloud onto either side of the dish, and serve.

**MAKES 1 SERVING**