



An Excerpt from Lisa's 'Ultimate Training Cookbook'

Marathon des Sables Delight
(or 'How to manage a week in the desert
like a walk in the park.')

Ingredients

Serves 1 (all measures noted in weekly portions)

2—6:00 AM Spinning Class (60 min in duration)

2—Yoga classes (60 min in duration)

1—Stairmaster Session (40 min)

1—Elliptical Session (40 min)

1—Rowing Machine Session (30 min)

1—Long Run (4-5 hours)

2—Short Runs (1-2 hours)

1—Day Off

Add a pinch of Jump Rope, Stretching, Upper Body Weight Lifting, Sit-ups, and Push-ups as needed.

Note: No brains are needed to complete this tasty masterpiece. In fact, most accomplished chefs would agree that for too much thinking can get in the way of utilizing the more essential ingredients: determination and will power.

Step 1: Contact Lisa about 10 months prior to the big day. Monkey around with her program for a few weeks, ignoring entirely her suggestion to include yoga in the mix. Finally, after enduring an assortment of muscle strains and body aches, agree to never deviate from the program again.

Step 2: Participate in the Chicago Marathon (Oct '06) after only 5 weeks of training following 2 months of inactivity due to injuries. Initially balk at Lisa's suggestion to use a 9:1 run/walk ratio from the 3 mile marker to 20 mile marker during the race. Then decide wise-up and follow directions. Ignore fans' efforts to encourage me on when I start walking only 30 minutes into the race. Notice after a few miles that my splits (including walking 10% of the time) are tracking just about at my previous personal best. Turn it on at the 20 mile marker (per Lisa's plan) and pass a bout a thousand runners who are struggling mightily as they 'hit the wall'. Cross the finish line

with a new personal best, shaving about 4 minutes off the previous one. Then enjoy the remainder of the afternoon without any fatigue or even a single body ache.

Step 3: Complete the Neera 6-Day Fast just prior to the Christmas Holidays, and feel like a new person. 12 lbs lighter and free of all kinds of toxins, I enjoy the finest present in recent memory: an unmatched sense of physical well-being and unbridled energy. I'm itching to head out the back door and run in the snow for hours. So I do!

Step 4: Go on autopilot through the Chicago winter months, following Lisa's plan for each day and soon begin to enjoy a level of fitness not achieved since my teenage years.

Step 5: Do a double-take when Lisa suggests I sign up for a 50 Mile Ultra (the Rocky Raccoon Endurance Trail Run in Feb '07), then come to my senses and do what I'm told. Show up and follow directions, completing my first 50 mile race in 9hrs 26 min (second in my age group), then wake up the next morning with little more than a slight tightness in my quads.

Step 6: Enter the home stretch of my MDS training, running the equivalent of a marathon every Saturday, and beginning to prepare myself by carrying a piano on my back during workouts. Do another Neera Cleansing Fast 2 weeks before race day and feel absolutely ready.

Step 7: Buy my airplane ticket and show up at the starting line in the Sahara, unsure of the hardships awaiting me, yet confident that my preparation would carry me through.

Step 8: Steadfastly follow Lisa's plan by taking it slow for the first 3 stages. Begin to understand how the terrain and weather conspire with my gear, nutrition, and emotions to produce the magic that is the Marathon des Sables.

Step 9: Attack the Long Stage, using what has been learned so far to push when possible and ease back when necessary. Finish in cold and darkness 11hrs and 45 min later, feeling like I had met the most difficult physical and emotional challenge of my life head-on, and won!

Step 10: Complete the final 2 Stages with a strong, steady pace and cross the finish line feeling a sense of quiet confidence and deep personal satisfaction. I stop and mug for pictures, my smile capturing a slew of unnamed emotions that seem to scream out loud: 'Life is good! Very, very good!'

Step 11: Walk away from the desert and back to my urban roots without any sense of physical discomfort or fatigue (save a couple of fast-healing blisters). Indeed, I woke up the day after the race feeling like I could get right back out there and complete a marathon, reflecting back with amazement that I had pushed my body and mind harder

during the past week than any time in my life. Yet the near exhaustion felt at the end of each stage, had been replaced by pain-free muscles and boundless energy each morning.

Step 12: I reflect back at the challenge well-met, at the hardships faced both physical and emotional, at the hard-earned victories won one step at a time, and understand that I have truly been blessed. For good health, extraordinary support, and for the wonderful opportunity to have participated in the Marathon des Sables, I will be forever grateful. Thank you, Lisa—none of this would have been possible without you.