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Being a great cook is no excuse for being overweight

Chef Anthony Sedlak, shocked at being a 'big fat guy' on TV, fought to become fit and lean



The host of Food Network's *The Main*, chef Anthony Sedlak has lost nearly 50 pounds since 2009. The avid cyclist has done it by cutting portions and exercising daily. Photograph by: Handout, Postmedia News

**By Suzanne Wintrob
For Postmedia News**

When he caught a glimpse of his 235-pound body on television in 2009, Anthony Sedlak decided being a chef wasn't a licence to overeat.

"I saw this big fat guy," says the host of Food Network Canada's *The Main*. "I mean, I can hide behind my industry that says never trust a skinny chef ... [But] thank God for the Gordon

Ramsays of the world, who was the first to say chefs don't have to be fat. I'm on that same program: Don't trust the fat greasy chefs."

Piling the weight on his 6'2" frame was a slow process, the result of Sedlak's busy schedule as a TV personality, caterer and restaurant consultant. He says he wasn't paying attention to his food intake and was constantly tired. He felt so uncomfortable in his body that sometimes he didn't even want to leave the house.

But that TV sighting kick-started a rapid shift in Sedlak's lifestyle. A self-confessed "extremist" and longtime cyclist, he got back on the saddle by exercising, curbing his carbs and going organic.

Now, at 190 pounds, the Vancouver resident is feeling great and cooking up a storm. He recently wrapped up taping his fourth season of *The Main*, a stylish half-hour that has him preparing delicious dishes featuring one main ingredient. He's brand ambassador for Stonyfield organic yogurt and runs a catering business with his childhood friend and business partner, Bryan Kelly. The two hope to open a Great American Cheesecake Company franchise in Vancouver this summer.

Sedlak, 27, grew up at the base of Vancouver's Grouse Mountain. When he decided at 13 years old that he needed extra cash to buy snowboard gear and take out girls, he hiked up the mountain and snagged a job as a busboy at the ski resort, a job that happily came with a free snowboard pass. He worked whenever he could, moving up over time from the café to the bistro and finally the dining room.

His white-light moment came the day he invited his pal Bryan to the resort's dining room for a meal. He recalls, "I realized I wanted to be in a proper kitchen where the real chefs play." So he stayed late and proved his worth.

By 15, he was attending an alternative high school with a culinary program, then scurrying up the mountain every day after school and on weekends to his job as a dining room cook. By the time he graduated, he was well into an apprenticeship.

Next he headed to London, where he became a junior sous chef at the southern French restaurant *La Trompette*.

He worked his way to executive sous chef before returning to Grouse's dining room. Several years and culinary competitions later, he landed the Food Network gig.

Although his cooking repertoire is vast (his favourite *The Main* recipes were published in a 2008 cookbook), Sedlak has become a vocal advocate of organic food. Chemicals on produce "totally weirds me out," he explains, and he believes organic foods' benefits should be considered when looking at their price tags.

"It's important what we put into our bodies is top-shelf, top-pick product," he says. "No one blinks twice about spending \$800 on an iPhone, or having an iPod or a laptop. They get \$300 cellphone bills each month and say, 'Well, I've gotta pay it.' But when an apple costs 13 cents more, it's a big deal."

To avoid a repeat of last year's weight scare, Sedlak complements his organic regimen with exercise. He initially ran about 20 minutes each day, and though he never enjoyed it he persisted because of the rush he always felt in the final 250 metres.

Now he runs, enjoys cross-country skiing for about two hours a day, five days a week during the winter and cycles about 60 kilometres a day when weather permits. He never eats past 7 p.m. ("I want to eat until 11 p.m. but then I sleep on those calories," he quips) and drinks lots of water.

Along the way, Sedlak has learned two valuable lessons: Weight is a simple mathematical calculation of calories in versus calories out, and patience pays off.

"Your body doesn't react to things that you're doing for at least two or three weeks," he says. "If you can hold your breath for a month until you see results, I find that very inspiring. You've got to stick to it and keep your nose to the grindstone."

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