



# BEST BODY

## BORN-AGAIN CHRISTINA

Christina Aguilera is a new woman. Yeah, she's still rocking the pinup aesthetic (and that powerhouse voice), but take a closer look. Her mind is stiller, her body more at ease, and her sense of self stronger than ever—and it's all thanks to yoga.

*By Lori Majewski*

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRIAN BOWEN SMITH



Floating down the white marble staircase of her sun-drenched Mediterranean mansion, a barefoot Christina Aguilera smiles and offers a soft greeting: “Welcome to my sanctuary.”

The 35-year-old singer is clad in a black, floor-skimming cotton dress and supersoft white cotton sweater, her platinum hair pulled into a messy-on-purpose pony with wisps framing her face. She’s not makeup-free, but the little she’s wearing (nude gloss, dewy foundation) harks back to the doe-eyed 21-year-old who gave us the anthemic “Beautiful” way back in 2002.

Maybe we’d all look this well rested if we lived in Christina’s Beverly Hills hideaway. Seriously—the place is so chill, you half expect a masseuse to waltz up and ask “Swedish or shiatsu?” at any moment. Three fireplaces are ablaze, despite the 73°F weather, and every room sparkles with new-agey crystals, including two humongous purple geodes that are almost as tall as the 5’2” star herself. “They breathe as you do,” explains Christina of the hollow, amethyst-lined rocks. “It’s not like you just put them in your house—you have to give them your energy.”

It isn’t until the white-and-gold living room that you spot any evidence that there’s a celebrated musician in residence, not some glamorous mystic guru. Just past a massive gilded Buddha, there’s a grand piano, a microphone, and a turntable, along with multiple awards—except, where’s her Grammy? “Grammys,” corrects the six-time winner (including one Latin Grammy). “Would you like to see them?”

Christina strolls into her recording studio where high up on a shelf are the half-dozen mini gramophones and her favorite laurel: the 11th Annual George McGovern Leadership Award, which she earned for her volunteer work with the World Food Program USA. Along with photos of her children, Max, 8, and Summer, 1, her other most prized possession hangs in the family room next door: “Girl with Red Balloon,” a wall-size piece by graffiti artist Banksy. “I got in with him early—I’m proud of that,” says Christina, who’s lost count of how many of his pieces she owns. But this, one of the Brit’s most famous works, depicting a child letting go of a red heart-shaped balloon, is particularly telling. “It says so much about how I try to live my life,” she reflects. “Just surrendering and knowing that I’ve done my best. In the grand scheme of things, I’m not in control, and that’s okay, you know?”

**DANCER’S POSE**  
To prevent a leg cramp, keep your raised foot flexed during this chest opener.

**REVOLVED HEAD-TO-KNEE POSE**  
This twist energizes the spine and opens tight hips.

BCBG JUMPSUIT, VICTORIA’S SECRET BRA, ALEXIS BITTAR BRACELET



## FINDING PEACE—AND YOGA

If you think this ultra-Zen woman sounds like a far cry from the divalicious Xtina of the aughts, you'd be right. In 2014, about a year after moving in with her fiancé, *Burlesque* production assistant Matthew Rutler, 30, Christina became pregnant with their child (her second). She'd been the main provider for her family since she began singing at weddings and block parties at age 7, but with her daughter on the way, Christina decided she was "on a mission" to take better care of herself. "I said, 'I'm looking to open that next chapter of my life and build something rooted in positivity, truth, and love.' That was when I found yoga."

Her doctor put her in touch with Krista Cahill, a yoga teacher in Venice, California, who shares Christina's fitness philosophy. "Health shouldn't be a tortuous process," says the singer. "Healthy is a state of mind, and it has to come from inside. It is not a situp; it's not a calorie count—I hate that! I don't go by scales, I go by how I feel in my clothes, how good I feel in my body, how well I can pull off a show."

Christina and Krista meet for private, one- to two-hour hatha-Vinyasa sessions up to five times a week. Rather than focus on getting buff or slimming down, the duo approaches the process from a standpoint of exchanging "love and good energy." But that isn't to say their routines aren't challenging: The poses Christina's striking in the photos on the previous pages are intermediate level and take a fair amount of warming up. And yep, 17 months after giving birth to Summer, the voluptuous star is looking quite svelte, but she hasn't been angsty over losing the pregnancy pounds—for her, it just happens to be a nice by-product.

## MOTHER KNOWS BEST

Giving birth to her children shifted both Christina's perspective and her priorities, and not just in that clichéd selfless-mom way. "Mothers are constantly expected to be the nurturers, the givers, the providers of a comfortable home," she says. "We're expected to be pregnant, have the kids, breast-feed once we have the babies. And we're expected to look amazing after baby, right? Keep our husbands and boyfriends interested—because we're supposed to get back to sexy and keep things exciting in the bedroom. There's such a long list. Having children is the ultimate joy, and I love my kids, but women have to find time to nurture themselves. If someone has a baby, the first thing I'm like is, 'Okay, are you taking care of you?'"

## MOVES LIKE XTINA

Instructor Krista Cahill designed this energizing 20-minute sequence to fit into Christina's filming breaks—and now, between your daily meetings.



**1. CROSSED LEGS** Settle into a comfy position. For five minutes, focus inward and observe your breath, striving to make the inhales and exhales smooth and evenly spaced. It may help to place your hands on your rib cage; think about shifting your diaphragm down.



**2. SEATED TWIST** Bring your right hand to your left knee, twisting your torso so your left hand rests behind you. Hold for five breaths, stretching taller through the crown of the head. Come back to center, recross your legs so the opposite is in front, and repeat on the other side.



**3. RUNNER'S LUNGE** Stand in a lunge, with your left knee above the left ankle. The right heel should be on a wall behind you to ensure you open your hip. Gaze down and place your hands on the floor under your shoulders and on each side of the front foot.



**4. HIGH LUNGE** After a few full breaths in runner's lunge, root your front foot firmly into the ground and rise up, lifting both arms overhead, keeping your shoulders down. Lift your torso, and square your hips to face forward. Take a few more full breaths, then repeat poses 3 and 4 with the other foot in front.



**5. FIGURE-4 HIP OPENER** Lie faceup on the floor, lift both legs, and bend them to a 90-degree angle, with your left foot flat on the floor. Cross your right knee over the left, using your hands to gently pull your left leg toward you, opening your hips. Do this for 60 seconds, then switch legs. Repeat on the other side.



**6. SPINAL TWIST** Hug both knees into your chest and drop them to one side at hip height. Lift your legs on an inhale, return to center, then twist to the other side on an exhale. To end, lie on your back with your legs extended straight out in front of you (corpse pose) for a few full breaths.

Christina followed every ounce of her own advice following Summer's birth, opting to sit out seasons six and seven of *The Voice*—a choice that gave her some pause. Though she'd vacated her judge's chair for season four, it was to promote an album, 2012's *Lotus*. This time, it was for maternity leave, which took some getting used to for the consummate hustler. "The fact that my mom was pushed around by my father...I decided early on that I'm not going to be that woman. I'm not going to allow myself to be in a situation where I have to rely on this man or that person for financial means," she says. "So I strived to be that workhorse. I felt like, 'Okay, I can't be weak; I can't say no. I always have to be strong. I'm going to get the work done.'"

But ultimately, Christina realized that a parent taking time off to bond with her baby isn't about being feeble or selfish. "It's taking care of myself so I can take care of everybody else," she says. She shares this viewpoint with presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, a proponent of paid-leave laws and someone Christina has known and admired for years. The connection doesn't end there: Former Secretary Clinton, a George McGovern Leadership honoree herself, was the one who presented the award to Christina on behalf of the World Food Program, and Christina decided to support Clinton's campaign in a big way by cohosting a \$1 million fundraiser with Rutler at their home back in November. "Hillary was like, 'I listened to

“HEALTHY HAS TO  
COME FROM INSIDE.”



‘Fighter’ on the way here—it’s a song that inspires and empowers me,” recalls Christina. “I’m like, ‘Oh my god, I can’t believe Hillary is saying this!’”

## BEST-LAID PLANS

Political soirees aside, Christina’s schedule is ramping way up: At the time of the interview, she was busy taping the blind auditions for her return to *The Voice* (season 10 begins airing February 29) while writing and recording her new album with fellow *Voice* coach Pharrell Williams, among others. While it’s been three years since her last release (the tepidly received *Lotus*), she’s contributed vocals to an array of smashes: “Moves

Like Jagger” by Maroon 5, “Feel This Moment” by Pitbull, and the one that gave Christina her last Grammy: “Say Something,” by A Great Big World. As an enduring force in the music industry, she doesn’t feel the need to rush her next record just to get something out there. “I’m not going to collect a bunch of songs from writers and producers and think, *I’m going to put my voice on that and call it a day*,” she says. “I have to be invested, because [that’s when] you’re going to get your ‘Fighters,’ your ‘Beautifuls.’” Instead, she’s borrowing a page from Adele, who took four years to make her record-breaking 25. “She has a way of singing with such truth,” says

Christina. “I love how genuine she comes across in her songwriting.”

Another thing Christina isn’t rushing: her wedding to Rutler. Though the pair got engaged on Valentine’s Day 2014, they’re taking their time with the planning. “We discuss it when we’re snuggling in bed...but it’s a casual conversation,” she says. Their no-pressure approach has even inspired her to write a new song. “The lyrics are like, ‘We don’t need a big audience/A dozen roses and a wedding dress...’ It’s about how we don’t need anything ostentatious to celebrate our love.”

## CENTERED STAGE

It’s taken a lot of time, introspection, and, yes, forgiveness for Christina to reach this turning point, where everything is finally falling back into place. It started with ensuring she and ex-husband Jordan Bratman could remain friends and happily share custody of their son. “I never wanted Max to be around arguing or unnecessary discomfort,” says Christina, alluding to the alleged domestic abuse she grew up around. “I could be bitter about my childhood, but if anything, I’m thankful that I have that experience. I know my bigger purpose is to empower, to encourage other people to find their voice.” Through her new music and her yoga practice, Christina has rediscovered her own too. “My whole life has been about ‘fight or flight,’ but yoga has helped me to appreciate the moment and be okay with the now,” she says. “No matter what chaos is around me, it gets me back into my body. [I’ve learned that] the stronger you get within yourself, everything else just bounces off.” ■

## WHAT A GIRL WANTS

“Women need to spend more time loving and trying to pamper themselves,” declares Christina. Here, three ways she chooses to chill.

1. **Bubble baths!** “I find water to be very therapeutic. I treat myself with luxurious bath oils and balms—I’m always on the hunt for new products. I love eucalyptus.”
2. **Video games!** Christina plays “corny mystery games” on her iPhone but she also has an entire home arcade with Mario Kart and the Addams Family, plus pinball machines and a pool table.
3. **Disneyland!** The former Mouseketeer heads to the Anaheim, California, park at least “once a month, even for date night.”