



Butterfly dress, **Tom Ford** (\$4,250). Crystals, **CityCenter**, 702-740-2940. Necklace, **Robert Lee Morris** (\$1,200). **Neiman Marcus Fashion Show**, 702-731-3636; robertleemorris.com. Woven cable ring, **David Yurman** (\$8,500). **The Forum Shops at Caesars**, 702-794-4545; davidyurman.com

she does it all

SWIMSUIT MODEL AND AVID FOODIE CHRISSY TEIGEN DISHES ON HER FAVORITE VEGAS RESTAURANTS, HER FIRST TV HOSTING GIG—AND THE DETAILS OF HER WEDDING TO JOHN LEGEND.

BY LISA ARCELLA | PHOTOGRAPHY BY RONY SHRAM

Chrissy Teigen glances nonchalantly at the monitor displaying images of her without critiquing a single detail, making her perhaps the most self-confident model in the business. She is between setups for her *Vegas* magazine shoot, and after quietly checking out the photographer's handiwork, she quickly turns her focus to something far more important. "There are still gummy bears left, right?" she asks with a laugh, followed by a warning to no one in particular: "They better not all be gone!"

The vivacious model, blogger, and now TV host is at her most animated when talking about food... any kind of food. She has tweeted her love for Taco Bell and McDonald's, and on her food blog, SoDelushious.com, she offers a sophisticated take on topics such as "The Perfect Scallop" and dishes like her Thai-born mother's Jok Moo. Before the modeling world discovered her, Teigen, 27, dreamed of going to culinary school. So she will never be the super-skinny mannequin who pushes her food around the plate. Eating, she says, is one of life's greatest pleasures. "I will eat anything, and I'm actually more interested in eating than cooking," she adds with a laugh. "I love to cook, but when you're cooking for a big group of people, you're always worried about how it's going. I don't end up eating a lot by the time it's all done. But eating a great meal at a great restaurant? That is it for me. There's nothing I love more."

While shooting VH1's *Model Employee* for four weeks at

Mandalay Bay last summer, Teigen was able to turn her eye (and stomach) on Vegas's cuisine, and she is effusive about her love for the chef favorites Hot N Juicy Crawfish and Lotus of Siam. "It's one of the best Thai restaurants anywhere," she says, and she can be quite picky. "I will actually plan vacations around how good the restaurants are. 'Wait, this hotel is amazing but the restaurant isn't so great? Forget it, I'll go someplace else.'"

Her voracious appetite is positively mystifying, considering that Teigen first found fame as a swimsuit model, going on to become a fixture of recent *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issues and even creating her own swimwear collection. And although she is 5-foot-9 and a size two, she admits it takes hard work and lots of *Physique 57* classes to stay that way. "My dad is this big Norwegian-American guy, and I'm built more like him," Teigen says. "I can't eat whatever I want all the time, but I don't deny myself either. I'll have a great meal and then say to myself that I can't eat like that tomorrow. I eat pretty normally unless I'm getting ready for a bathing suit photo shoot, and I've been getting into juices for that—things like kale and apple, not those disgusting cleanses with the cayenne and the maple syrup. I did that once and was staring at a cracker, and then I finally ate it and felt terrible about it! That's no way to live."

Teigen is remarkably open and uncensored and has thus become something of a social-media darling, documenting her glamorous career and

equally glamorous personal life as the fiancée of singer John Legend with often hysterical, self-effacing tweets. Recent hits include: "I love it when I order in and they send six forks. And by love it I mean sob uncontrollably" and "I can't believe none of you have made fun of me for doing an Ed Hardy ad. Like that is how amazed I am, I just called myself out on it." Nothing appears to be off-limits—she even used Twitter to defend her love against cheating gossip. And she has no qualms about offering her political and social opinions—or calling out followers who disagree with her. "I'm learning to see other people's point of view," she says, "but I'm also very passionate about the things I believe in." And while Teigen relishes the notion that she can influence opinion, she also admits that online criticism can sting. "I learned a long time ago not to Google myself," she says. "But I read all the comments on my blog. I don't really care if people say they don't like the way I look or something like that. But if they say who do I think I am offering cooking advice or offering political opinions, then it can really hurt."

But not enough to rein her in. Teigen found herself in a bit of hot water last March when she posted on Instagram (and quickly removed) a photo of herself getting a spray tan in the nude. "It was embarrassing," she says with a burst of giggles. "My mother took that picture, and I didn't realize it would be such a

big deal. I got 13,000 more followers right away after that! I think they thought, Oh yeah, I am going to follow this chick, but then found they were signing on to something else entirely. Now they get dog photos." While her Instagram feed is a hit, she says it's Twitter and blogging that have allowed her extroverted personality to shine: "Thank God Twitter wasn't around when I was in high school or I would have never graduated. I love it."

Teigen, who is constantly laughing or cracking a joke, learned to be at ease in any social situation out of necessity. Born in tiny Delta, Utah, she was always the new kid in school as the family moved to accommodate her father's job as an electrician. After stays in Washington state, Idaho, and Hawaii, the family landed in Huntington Beach, California. "I couldn't believe how hot the girls all were," Teigen says. She also never believed she was one of them. A photographer discovered her at a surf shop where she was working, but it took a long time for her to believe she had what it took to make a living in front of the camera. "Modeling had never crossed my mind," she says. "For someone as insecure as I was, it didn't seem possible." But her stunning looks and bikini-ready body camouflaged the self-doubt, and her career as a model was born.

She might have gotten stuck in the small time if friend and fellow model Brooklyn Decker hadn't introduced her to the team at *Sports Illustrated*. "That changed everything for me," Teigen says. Ad campaigns and

"Chrissy is outspoken in the best way." —Eric Ripert



Silk gold beaded dress, **Salvatore Ferragamo** (\$7,400). *The Forum Shops at Caesars*, 702-933-9333; ferragamo.com. Trinity hoops, **Cartier** (\$4,125). *Crystals, CityCenter*, 702-487-3160; cartier.com. Oracle cuff bracelet, **Lanvin** (\$780). *Crystals, CityCenter*, 702-982-0245; lanvin.com



Jersey draped dress, **Donna Karan** (\$1,795). *Crystals*, CityCenter, 702-207-2420; donnakaran.com. Lucite cuff, **Chanel** (price on request). *Via Bellagio*, 702-765-5505; chanel.com

Styling by Jocelyn Goldstein at margaretmaldonado.com. Makeup by Natalie DiStefano at Rita Hazan Salon. Hair by Dimitrios Tsioumas for Mizu NY. Manicure by Myrdith Leon-McCormack using Chanel at Factory Downtown.

magazine covers followed. Although she hasn't given up modeling, she is now expanding her career. She recently appeared with Le Bernardin chef Eric Ripert—she's a big fan of his—on his YouTube series *On the Table* and made the soft-spoken Frenchman blush when she told him bluntly that modeling “is like prostitution, Eric. You just can't give it up—the money's too good!” “Chrissy is outspoken in the best way!” Ripert says. “She is fun and energetic, and her positive energy is contagious, as is her passion for food.”

It's that infectious personality that Teigen plans on using to segue into the next stage of her life. On May 8 she debuted as a reality TV host, on the new VH1 competition series *Model Employee*. The show's first season involved eight models (some of whom she has actually worked with before) competing to become the face of Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino. They soon discover they're not participating in a run-of-the-mill modeling competition when they're subjected to an array of crazy challenges, like cleaning the hotel's shark tank or flying through Aureole's wine tower on a wire pulley.

The move to TV host came naturally for Teigen, who says she ultimately wants a hybrid career, like those of the women she most admires: Tyra Banks, Heidi Klum, and Padma Lakshmi. “I actually think I'm better in front of a television camera than a still camera,” she says. “I love to talk... obviously.” Teigen was a shoo-in for the VH1 job, says Eli Holzman, president of All3Media America, which executive-produces the show. “It was love at first sight,” he says. “Chrissy is unfiltered, and we love that about her. We tried our best to allow her the freedom for her personal voice to come through the show. I can't remember a time that we needed to rein in her personality. She is a pro.”

Although her fiancé came to visit her often during filming last summer, she says she also relished the opportunity to spend time with her half-sister, Tina, who lives in Las Vegas. “We always have a good time here,” Teigen says. “How can you not? I lived at Mandalay Bay the entire time we were shooting, and at one point I realized that I had spent 11 days without ever going outside. I didn't even realize it, because there was just so much happening. I would have these 5 AM call times, and it would be hysterical to go through the casino and see the number of people who were still there [from the night before].”

Teigen found out she had booked the *Model Employee* gig during a backstage phone call while Legend was shooting the finale of the now-defunct TV show *Duets*. “I started crying like a baby,” she says. “It was embarrassing, but I was so happy. I had been waiting for an opportunity like this.” When she isn't working, she is usually in Los Angeles with Legend (who released a new album in June), her family, and her two dogs. The Grammy-winning singer shares her talent for cooking. “I love his fried chicken,” Teigen says. “I think his macaroni and cheese is a little dry, but he doesn't.” They collaborated on *Chrissy Teigen's Hungry*, a show on the Cooking Channel that explores the menu options for their upcoming wedding.

The couple met on the set of his video for the song “Stereo” in 2007 and were engaged in the Maldives in December 2011. As she curls up sideways in a big black armchair, Teigen looks down at the breathtaking cushion-cut diamond engagement ring on her finger and smiles. “He is such a romantic and so completely loving,” she says. “I am so much crazier than him, but he lets me be myself. Sometimes I'll say to him, ‘Is it okay to say this?’ And

he'll say, ‘Maybe not, but do whatever you want to do.’” She says the fact that they're polar opposites is partly why the relationship works so well, although Teigen jokes at times that she does wish he were a little more like her. “He's been working and shooting videos and I've been, I don't know, not jealous, but maybe a little insecure,” she says. “I know it's his work and I get that, but *we* met on a video shoot. So I feel these little pangs. But he never gets jealous! I shoot half-naked with male photographers and he'll just say, ‘Did you get good shots today?’”

Teigen will go out on tour with Legend later this year, but then there's the issue of their nuptials. While she won't be specific about a date, she says it will be soon—although it's taken almost a year and a half to finalize the details with LA wedding planner Lisa Vorce, because Teigen is, admittedly, indecisive. “We had a place picked out, and then I changed my mind about it,” she says. “I do that. I had a dress picked out for the Grammys, and then at the last minute I changed my mind because I just didn't like the first one anymore. But,” she says smiling, “I am still liking the feeling of being engaged to him.”

Teigen says the wedding will be rustic and intimate—and definitely not at the beach. The swimsuit model and former Hawaii resident has confessed that she isn't too keen on sand and doesn't really know how to swim. “I truly hate the beach,” she says. “The sand makes me feel dirty, and salt-water is my kryptonite. It's like acid to me, and not the fun acid.” After changing her mind about her wedding dress and buying multiple alternatives, she has finally settled on a Vera Wang stunner. “There's just something about her wedding dresses,” she says. “You try on a lot of others, and then you put on one of hers and there's just no comparison.”

Teigen would love to have a big family and has pictured herself with four children—and there had better not be a picky eater in the bunch. “I can envision everyone there for Sunday dinner,” she says. “They better show up!” But for now, she is fully savoring success and her moment in the spotlight: “I feel like every year it's been getting better and a little more exciting. Everything is sort of falling into place now. And it's all really good.” **V**

“I learned long ago not to Google myself.”

—Chrissy Teigen

