



Bill Clark/Roll Call

Nutritionist Janet Zalman holds a pound of fat and a fat guide book — tools she uses to help lobbyists make healthy decisions to keep their waistslines in check.

K St.'s Answer to Dr. Oz Keeps Lobbyists Trim

Janet Zalman Isn't a Doctor, but She Plays Medicine Woman to an Industry of Power Eaters

BY ANNA PALMER

Two breakfasts, a fundraising lunch, two receptions and a dinner are all in a typical day's work for most K Streeters, so it's not surprising that many wake up with expanding waistlines.

That's where Janet Zalman, founder of the Zalman Nutrition Group, comes in.

The Dr. Oz of K Street, Zalman is the lobbyists' health guru. She is a licensed nutritionist — not a doctor — and she appears to be a lobbyist's answer to the occupational hazard of overeating.

She has amassed a huge following downtown, helping advise the city's power brokers — such as Tony Podesta of the Podesta Group, Jeff Forbes of Cauthen, Forbes & Williams, Kelly Bingel of Mehلمان Vogel Castagnetti and Sandi Stuart of Clark & Weinstock — on the ins and outs of surviving the cocktail circuit without having to go up a pant size.

'Dr. Z's' Musts for Staying Slim on Fundraiser Fare

- Drink a glass of water before wine or alcohol at events.
- Limit sugar intake.
- Eat only one serving of starch per meal.
- Don't use food as a reward.
- Cheat high: Only break the rules for top-tier treats.

A petite, no-nonsense redhead, Zalman won't confirm who her clients are. "My lips are sealed," she said, but she does acknowledge that in the past 10 years, K Street has become a much bigger part of her practice.

Lobbyists say Zalman's direct approach appeals to them.

Stuart, who has gone to Zalman off and on for years, raves about her.

"She understands our lifestyle," Stuart said. "She gives practical advice. Instead of a forced diet, she figures out what works for you."

'Lobbyist Whisperer'

Mehlman Vogel's Bingel also swears by Zalman's advice.

"You've heard of the horse whisperer? Well, Janet Zalman is the lobbyist whisperer," Bingel said. "She's in my head at every social function saying, 'Why would you eat that? Do you know how much sugar is in that?'"

Sugar is a key to Zalman's food philosophy. After being in practice for almost 25 years, she said reducing sugar intake is one of the keys to successfully managing her clients' weights. She advises them to avoid foods high in sugar, with two exceptions: milk and fresh fruit.

Sugar isn't the only problem that lobbyists are facing.

Large restaurant portions and more complex flavors combined with the downtown life where nobody cooks is a recipe

for weight gain, according to Zalman.

"In that life it's about making smarter choices," Zalman said. "How do I survive the day when I have two breakfast meetings, one lunch, two receptions and a dinner? How do I, at best, not gain two pounds?"

In addition to cutting back on sugars, Zalman has clients write in a detailed food diary so that she can see when and how people are eating and what trigger foods spur their uncontrollable eating.

"She understands our lifestyle. ... Instead of a forced diet, she figures out what works for you."

Sandi Stuart, Clark & Weinstock lobbyist

She also advises clients to cut out what she calls "double starches" at meals. So, instead of having a baked potato and bread at a dinner, Zalman advises lobbyists to eat a single starch per setting.

Boozing It Down

In a food and event culture where drinking is the norm, Zalman also focuses on cutting back on drinking. She tells clients to always drink a glass of water before going to an event because most often people are so thirsty they don't even taste



To watch Zalman offer more of her favorite tips in a video, visit rollcall.com.

the glass of wine or cocktail. After that, she says it's okay to have a glass of wine. But if it's a night where the lobbyist has to make an appearance at three places, she recommends skipping the wine entirely at the first stop.

While moderation is key, Zalman said it's important to remember the rule of cheating high.

"If you are going to cheat, cheat high," Zalman said. "If you go to an event and the wine is mediocre, don't have any of it. If there are 1,000 people at a fundraiser, the wine is probably not going to be good."

While her clients are largely successful, "type A" personalities at work, Zalman said one of the crucial aspects of staying healthy is stopping the cycle of rewarding oneself with food.

"If you do a hundred things well — you push this bill through, have a great meeting here, you fundraise here — at the end of the day you feel successful because you've accomplished a lot," Zalman said. "Unfortunately, what happens is an individual then says, 'Look at the things I did today. I succeeded at A, B, C and D. I need to relax. I need a reward.'"

Podesta and his wife, Heather, are followers of Zalman.

Joking that he has had a lifelong disease of "skinny brother syndrome," riffing on his brother John's slender physique, Podesta said that in all seriousness, "It's hard to avoid not eating five meals a day."