



# LOOK WHO'S TALKING

BY ALICE LEE TEBB

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREGORY MILLER

FIT TO BE TRIED: You don't have to be a star to be in Amber O'Neal's show.

## SLIM CHANGE *Amber O'Neal gives Atlanta fitness fanatics the celebrity treatment.*

As the creator, owner and head trainer of Café Physique, Amber O'Neal runs a full-scale fitness and nutrition consultancy. But growing up in Elgin, Illinois, she was the "big girl" who dreaded recess. When she started taking aerobics and practicing portion control at 14, her body transformed and so did her life. She joined the basketball team, dated the football captain and was voted Most Likely to Succeed. "I learned that people do judge a book by its cover," she says, "and that fat-phobia is one of the last socially acceptable prejudices."

Those sobering lessons inspired O'Neal to help others maximize their potential. After earning her MBA at Florida A&M University, she worked for Champion Athleticwear in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, while pursuing her calling as a certified personal trainer on the side. An epiphany came courtesy of *Oprah* in 2004, when Renée Zellweger discussed her dramatic post-*Bridget Jones* weight loss. "I realized that what ordinary folks

need to succeed is the same thing all of the women in Hollywood get: food, fitness and fun delivered to their doorsteps," she says.

O'Neal moved to Smyrna and launched Café Physique in 2006. She now oversees a staff of 26 in-home personal trainers, Pilates instructors, yoga experts and registered dieticians, with clients ranging from time-starved moms to CEOs. She's also added backyard boot camps and a new training studio to the mix. Off-hours, O'Neal cherishes her own workouts—she's dabbled in everything from Tae Kwon Do to African dance—but indulges in a guilty pleasure once in awhile, though she leans more towards celebrity gossip than hot fudge sundaes. "I talk fast, move fast and think fast," she says. "I'm always going, going, going!" 

*Café Physique*, 404.444.2857 or [www.cafephysique.com](http://www.cafephysique.com).

**HOTS:** Massages from Spa Flow; workout clothes from lululemon athletica; chai lattes from Rev Coffee; bike rides on the Silver Comet Trail; Trainer's Special breakfast at American Roadhouse; Doro Wat from Meskerem Ethiopian Restaurant; Issey Miyake perfume. **NOTS:** Tow trucks in Castleberry Hill; reserved parking spaces; spam e-mail and forwards; watching sports on TV; expensive bottled water; four directions on I-285.