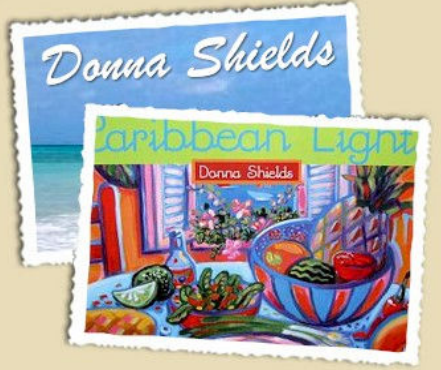


HOME INFORMATION MENU SHOP GROUP RATES EVENTS DESTINATIONS

## ISLAND LIFESTYLE



**Donna Shields**

Donna Shields, our new culinary contributor, is an expert on many food topics but especially on the flavors of the islands. Not only is she a long time Key West resident with lots of good stories to tell, but the girl is qualified to talk food. She's a former instructor from the Culinary Institute of America, a recipe developer and nutrition spokesperson for major food companies, food writer and cookbook author of *Caribbean Light*, 2008.

- [Caribbean Light Recipes](#)
- [Coastal Living Story](#)
- [Coastal Living Recipes](#)
- [Getting Swimsuit Slim](#)



Dive vacations usually include not only the diving but lots of partying to the wee hours, getting up early and then squeezing in two dives a day. You're probably eating out at restaurants and not watching the diet so well and maybe forgetting to hydrate (with water, not beer) throughout the day. And how about if you're a little overweight or maybe have high blood pressure? You combine all of these factors and it can spell trouble for a safe and enjoyable vacation.

Well, help is on the way. **ScubaFit™** and The **FitDiver™** program is a great way to prep yourself year round so that when you do break away on vacation, you're in good shape to better enjoy all that diving has to offer. **ScubaFit™** is operated by Gretchen Ashton who is not only an advanced certified diver but one energetic cookie. She started weightlifting in her mid-30's and went on to set all sorts of world records for power lifting. She's owned her own fitness studio and still does personal training in the San Diego area. I don't know about you, but this is the kind of person I'd want teaching me about dive fitness.

I never really gave it much thought as to why divers would need this sort of help, but Gretchen explained a few important things when I interviewed her.

*What made you think there was need for a business that helped divers get fit?*  
**Gretchen:** Over the years as I watched divers, I could tell there was a disconnect between their physical fitness and how a diver can handle themselves in the water. Less than 30% of divers routinely exercise and their most common health problems include high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. There's very little information out there on fitness training for divers and so I created The **FitDiver™** program.

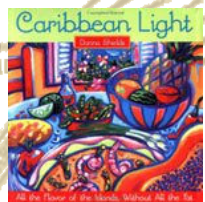
*What kind of services are offered with FitDiver™?*  
**Gretchen:** **FitDiver™** membership provides everything somebody needs to get started and maintain a healthy training program:

- **FitDiver™** Newsletter
- **FitDiver** logbook for assessment, planning goals and tracking progress
- **FitDiver™** training zones, custom workouts with images and descriptions and nutrition guidelines
- One-on-one coaching with me via email, phone, or live chats
- In-person workshops and demonstrations for dive clubs, dive shops and fitness centers

*What's the upside of being a fit diver and the downside of being an out of shape one?*  
**Gretchen:** Being fit will reduce your risk of injury while diving, will improve your diving performance and enjoyment and, hey, you'll look better in your wetsuit. The downside is that you'll be more prone to injury and if there's an underwater emergency, you don't have a lot of options out on a boat. For just \$30/year membership, it's well worth the money to help insure your health while diving.

Well, there you have it from the women who practically invented personal training for divers. And remember, this **FitDiver** stuff isn't just for guys. Gretchen has a Mermaid program tailored for the needs of female divers. Get in touch with her and have a safe dive vacation.

The food of the islands has its own special charm and aiming to take the fear out of the feasting, dietician and culinary instructor Donna Shields has penned *Caribbean Light*, a healthy romp through the kitchens of our West Indian neighbors. This and many other down island delicacies are available through *Caribbean Light*. To order a signed copy of *Caribbean Light* click [here](#)





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