

Claire Sweeney:

'It was hard work being a size 10 - now I love my curves!'

Actress Claire Sweeney reveals how her new man has boosted her body confidence and tells us all about her future hopes for a baby

Quick-fire questions!

Chinese or curry?

Curry - I love Indian food and I always order the same takeaway dishes - onion bhajis, a chicken tikka starter dish, chicken korma and peshwari naan. I'm so unsophisticated!

Heels or flats?

I wear heels most days. My favourites are my black patent Vivienne Westwood ones.

Crisps or chocolate?

White chocolate - or anything made by Cadbury.

Strictly or The X Factor?

Even though I actually went on *Strictly*, it has to be *The X Factor* - I just love all the singing. I want Ella Henderson to win this series - she's fantastic.

Wine or cocktail?

Wine - a beautiful-tasting red Amarene from Italy would be my choice!

AS SHE POSES IN TINY hot pants, actress and TV presenter Claire Sweeney can't stop smiling. A curvy size 12, she says she's never been happier - with her body or her love life.

Now 41, Claire admits she has had a life-long battle with her weight, but credits her businessman boyfriend, Daniel Reilly, 27, with her new-found body confidence.

"It's my happiest relationship to date. I'm really content. Also, Dan is so healthy, he prefers not to drink, which rubs off on me. I have two glasses of wine a week tops now, which is nothing compared to my younger 'out every night' days, and it has made a huge difference to my weight," says Claire, who is starring in musical *White Christmas* in Manchester over the festive season.

And, after posing in a series of revealing outfits for our exclusive shoot, she says: "I was nervous about showing this much flesh, but I feel amazing and I love these photos!"

Feeling comfortable with her body isn't the only reason Claire feels great - she's finally met the man she wants to start a family with. She says: "Before Dan, I hadn't met anyone I wanted a child with. But when the right person comes along, you know you

want children with them. I hope we have a family. I don't want to find myself alone in 40 years. I want to have a family around me."

And it's not just her love life that's making her smile. After years of trying every diet going, Claire is finally embracing her size. She's 10st 11lbs - almost a stone heavier than her usual weight. Claire, who has been dating Dan, an old friend, since January, says: "I've spent my life on a diet and it's a constant struggle. I just

'I realised that carrying a little weight isn't so terrible'

look at a cake and it goes straight to my bum!"

And while she's not a fan of the gym, Claire says it's important for her to stay fit and healthy - and says she has Dan by her side to motivate her. She says: "Dan is a fitness freak. He goes to the gym every day, so I've no excuse. While he works out, I do a hot yoga or hot Pilates class, usually four times a week. I love the hot classes. They're not as hot as Bikram yoga, which is practised in a room that's around 40 degrees, but it's warm enough to relax

your muscles so you're more flexible. Since I've started the sessions, my arms and legs have become more toned and my core muscles feel rock-hard."

She adds: "It's important to me to be healthy, but I can't see the point in being obsessed with weight. It's all about balance."

Claire - who launched a fashion range with online brand Fashion World for sizes 12-32 last spring - says

her attitude to weight changed when she gained 2st as an experiment for ITV's obesity documentary *My Big Fat Diet* three years ago.

She says: "I was a size 10 before the show and went up to a size 14. At that size, I was chatted up more. It made me realise that carrying a little weight is not so terrible."

Claire admits her weight has yo-yoed in the past. She was a size 10 in 2007 for her fitness DVD *Perfect Fit*. Then, after the documentary, she did weekly British Military Fitness sessions to lose the 2st and, a year later, she was back to a size 10. However, her weight crept back up to a size 14 in 2011 - and she was shocked at how she looked in a red bikini on a Caribbean holiday. She said at the time: "My stomach looked huge, my bum and thighs untuned. It was awful."

And Claire - who is a healthy weight and size for her 5ft 8 frame - admits it's hard work staying slim as you get older. She says: "In the past, I'd cut back on food and go to the gym and my body would change instantly - now it's much slower."

Like most women, she has parts of her body she'd like to improve and admits: "Even at my slimmest, I'd think my bum was big or my thighs looked fat. Now I look back at those pictures and think I looked great!"

On a typical day, Claire eats porridge and blueberries for breakfast, soup with Ryvita and cottage cheese for lunch, then chicken or fish served with lots of veg for tea. But she does have one "naughty day" a week - usually when they visit Dan's mum, who she says is an amazing cook and does delicious shepherd's pies and roast dinners. Claire grins: "You've got to live, haven't you?"

And Claire - who appeared as Roxie Hart in stage show *Chicago* in 2001 - says she's determined to stick to a balanced diet to stay in shape for the stage. She says: "I need to be fit for my Christmas show, so I'm eating healthily and keeping my diet balanced. I have to squeeze into a Jessica Rabbit-style frock on stage. That keeps me on track!"

By Caroline Jones

● Claire will be appearing in *White Christmas at The Lowry* in Manchester, 30 Nov 2012-5 Jan 2013

Claire says she felt amazing posing for our photos

CLOSER EXCLUSIVE PICTURES!



VITAL STATS
Age: 41
Height: 5ft 8
Weight: 10st 11lbs
Dress size: 12



She admits she was shocked by how "untuned" she looked in her bikini last year in the Caribbean

Now a size 12, she says she's never been happier with her figure

ALL YOU NEED TO LOSE WEIGHT FOR LIFE



Behind the scenes!

● **She wore...** A silk black vest, black jeans and black lacy boots.

● **She ate...** Miso soup and sushi from Itsu.

● **She brought...** Her own heated rollers to the shoot to ensure she had the perfect curls.



She's been with businessman Dan since January



Claire played Roxie Hart in stage show *Chicago* in 2001