

# A Beautiful Life

Christie Brinkley talks about her modeling career, booming businesses, and celebrating life

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“I love your dress –that color looks great on you,” Christie Brinkley compliments me on my Kelly-green dress as we sink into a white, cushy couch in W South Beach’s chic living room. Within the first few minutes of our chat, I am enchanted by Christie. Not only is she gorgeous, but she emanates a maternal-like warmth with her soothing cadence, kind blue eyes, and sincere smile. And her style – I would wear her entire ensemble; she is dressed in a red floral, off-the-shoulder summer dress accessorized with large, gold hoop earrings, and nude, strappy heels. Her long, blonde locks rest on her shoulders in soft curls.

The age-defying supermodel looks phenomenal. As a spokesperson for Ultherapy (which lifts skin on the brow, neck, under-chin, and improves décolletage wrinkles), Christie has been vocal about the non-invasive procedure being a part of her beauty routine. "I wondered if people would think I'm phony and fake. But it's better to be honest and say, "Yeah, this is what I do," she has said about Ultherapy, which revives collagen and elastin naturally with no downtime.

The three-time *Sports Illustrated* cover girl is in Miami to help the magazine's editor, MJ Day, with their open casting call. "I completely understand why she wanted other people there because I would never in a million years want the responsibility of trying to figure out which girls are going to be in and which you have to let go, because honestly, we met so many amazing girls today." Thousands of models showed up from all over the globe, and Christie met with about 18 determined models, who had her crying and laughing during their chat. What sort of advice would you like to have received when you started out with *SI*? "It's funny, I look back at some of the pictures and I can remember posing for the picture and being sure that I didn't deserve to be there. I literally, in my first photo, was squirming thinking my hips are too big, my thighs are too big. I don't know what to do with my hands. [Former editor] Jule Campbell, as I was squirming, goes, 'Oh my God, look how she moves. It's fabulous,'" she says with a big smile. "She just thought I was working it in front of the camera."

Last year Christie's daughters Alexa Ray Joel and Sailor Brinkley Cook joined her on an *SI* photo shoot, and she was surprised to find that the two also stressed about the same things she did forty years earlier, despite being raised to be confident, smart girls. "But still, there's something where I guess you're like, kind of vulnerable, in a sense. But if you can find power in that moment, then I think there's something to be said for them." Her advice for young women? Don't compare yourself to others. "You have something special to offer. Sometimes it's the thing that you think makes you different that actually makes you unique and special. If I had a little more confidence in the beginning, I would've enjoyed myself a little bit more than worrying so much."



What would people be surprised to find out about you?

“I think they’re surprised by how rugged I could be. I was a National Cutting Horse Association champion one year.”





Growing up, modeling was never on Christie's radar. Born in Michigan and raised in Los Angeles, when Christie was younger, she'd cut up fashion magazines and glue them together the way she thought they should be. If anything, Christie, who was always interested in the arts, thought she would be an art director. Seeking independence, she moved to Paris, France for school and worked as an artist at Air France drawing palm trees, elephants, and such on their maps. "I was studying art at this really cool atelier art studio school where some of the best artists would come in, look over your shoulder, give you pointers while you worked with the live model. It was great. I was like, 'Well, I'll do a couple of jobs, pay for my sick dog.' One thing led to the next and I just kept being curious... Then, they wanted, right off the bat, me to do a ski trip with *Glamour* magazine and I just said, 'Wow, OK!'"

While she was living in France, she met with *Sports Illustrated's* Jule Campbell at a go-see in Los Angeles, and received a call back. "I had a perm in my hair that was so bad that I had all my hair hidden under a beret. And she said she just couldn't forget the girl in the beret and she wanted me to do it," she recalls about her start with the magazine. During her second year working with *SI*, Christie, who had only ever done women's magazines, landed the cover —exposing her to the other half of the population: men. Modeling took her to exotic locations all over the world —from Seychelles and Madagascar to Kenya with the elephants, and Captiva Island. "Just to be able to have those experiences and to be with the team up at sunrise, and there until the stars come up, until the last ray of light, I loved spending my day like that. I loved being with the whole team," she reminisces. "But when I got to do that with my daughters, even though it wasn't the place where nobody's been, it was still that kind of magic team work, being so aware of the light and just the scenery around you. It's a really special thing."

## Where do you go when you're in Miami?

“Yesterday, my son [Jack Brinkley-Cook] was in town staying at the SoHo House and he was like, ‘Mom, come over here and have some lunch with us, it’s really gorgeous.’ I went over there and had lunch. It was great. I love that. I really want to go to Little Havana and get some Cubano food,” she laughs. “I’m really loving the whole vibe down here. The hotels have a real laid-back hangout quality to them—they do a nice job kinda making it very comfortable and socialable. We keep bumping into people we know. It’s fun.”

Today, the Hamptons, New York-resident is a passionate entrepreneur helming several successful businesses. Christie worked with leading dermatologists to develop her age-perfecting skincare line, Christie Brinkley Authentic Skincare, which revitalizes skin and addresses the top 5 signs of aging, ranging from fine wrinkles, sagginess, discoloration, age spots, and crepiness. Recently, they added color cosmetics to the mix. “It’s really great quality, great prices, and everything does double-duty. Your foundation also has anti-aging active ingredients and moisturizing ingredients. Our lipstick has built-in moisturizer, so it never gets dry. Your makeup lasts all day,” she beams.

She also has her Hair2wear Christie Brinkley Collection hair extensions; her 24-year-old eyewear, Christie Brinkley Eyewear; and Bellissima, her vegan, organic, 100% natural Prosecco, available in a Brut DOC, a sparkling rosé, and zero-sugar. “Our zero-sugar is becoming our most popular because who doesn’t want to have a glass of Prosecco without the carbs, without the guilt?” And there’s Bella Sprizz, Christie’s brand-new aperitifs: citrus Italiano and elderflower. I am told that the liqueurs taste great mixed in with her zero-sugar prosecco on ice with a sprig of mint and twist of lime. Honestly, that sounds like my kind of cocktail.

“Bellissima means most beautiful, and it’s for your most beautiful moments in life,

to really celebrate them. You can’t allow these moments to just be lost. People are so busy rushing around, it’s really important to stop. Friends come over, don’t just be like, *Oh, hey*,” she says listlessly. “*Yay! You came over! Pop a cork.*” Bellissima Prosecco is also available in small bottles. Just add the topper to the “bambinos” and you’re good to go. “Say you’re on a boat or walking around at a game...it’s portable.”

Supermodel, author, actress, artist, entrepreneur – Christie has done it all. Which project do you receive the most recognition for? When people approach you, what do you normally hear from them? “A lot of people now are like, ‘Bellissimmaaaaa! Christie! Bellissima.’ And a lot of women come up to me and say, ‘I love the Charm lipstick.’ I still, to this day, get people singing to me either, ‘Uptown Girl’ [the hit song by Christie’s second husband, Billy Joel] or ‘Holiday Road.’ All the time. In New York, I’ll hear, ‘Yo! Uptown Girl!’ as they’re driving by or I’ll hear, ‘Holiday Rooooadd....’ from the movie, [National Lampoon’s] *Vacation.*” **ML**

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