



Six seasons into the run of CBS's *Criminal Minds*, **Kirsten Vangsness** will also appear as her character—FBI technical analyst (hacker) Penelope Garcia—in the midseason spin-off *Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior*. Vangsness still finds time to be active in Southern California's theater scene; she's also busy planning her wedding, which will be catered vegetarian.

—RYAN RITCHIE

Q How did you get the role on *Criminal Minds*?

A The part was originally written for a guy and cast with a guy, but they realized the show was too guy-heavy. It started as a two-line part; they wrote the character back into the show, and it turned into a regular role. I'm a theater girl—I can do something in one take and I can work really fast—and I write too. The evolution of the character has been a lot my doing.

Q Penelope Garcia is tech savvy. What about you?

A Not as much as she is, but I am more tech savvy than most people. I'm probably always going to be kind of a Luddite, but she has inspired me. I'm a nerd, but in a different way. And I'm a horrible typist.

Q Can you tell us about your becoming vegetarian?

A It's been 10 years, except for at the beginning of the show when I got out of it and ate fish. But then I stopped; it became too much of a negative emotional experience to eat a creature. Eating vegetarian is a wonderful way to tread lighter on the Earth, and it feels better physically and emotionally for me. Nothing I could think of would taste as good as that feeling.

NATURAL Rx

PROBLEM: Osteoarthritis

SOLUTION: White willow bark

THE SCOOP: If osteoarthritis is thwarting your pledge to get active in the New Year, white willow bark (*Salix alba*) can help renew your resolve. Containing a potent analgesic called salicin—a chemical similar to the pain-fighting ingredient in aspirin—white willow bark has been shown to offer relief from the aching stiffness of osteoarthritis. A study in *Phytotherapy Research* found that OA patients taking an extract of the woody bark experienced less pain and better movement in their joints. While white willow bark can take longer to kick in than aspirin, the relief may last longer, and it doesn't cause the stomach problems associated with high doses of aspirin.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Laurie Steelsmith, ND, LAC, author of *Natural Choices for Women's Health*, recommends taking a standardized willow bark extract containing 100 milligrams of salicin two or three times a day. Avoid if you have ulcers, stomach problems, or allergies to aspirin; consult with your health care practitioner if you're using pharmaceuticals.

—RACHEL DOWD



Try: NutriBiotic Relief! White Willow Bark Extract, \$8.99/60 veggie caps; nutribiotic.com

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