



# Diet Debates and Purple States **PART 1**



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Dr. David Katz:

The basic theme of dietary pattern that is optimal for the human animal is perfectly clear. And Michael Pollan expressed it in seven words, to "Eat food, not too much, mostly plants".

Dr. Paul Saladino:

There's a great meme that goes around, and it's a picture of King Henry the Eighth, and he says, "We had vegetarians in my day too, they were called peasants". And it's true. Historically, even in the last 500 years, the plant foods were second class citizen food. So why are we choosing to eat peasant food, slave food, survival food? Why are we told that survival food is the best food for humans?

Dr. John Berardi:

This is the Dr. John Berardi show, a podcast that seeks important lessons in a seemingly unlikely place, amid competing points of view. In each episode, I look at fascinating, sometimes even controversial topics, through the minds of divergent thinkers, and together we tease out unifying threads from ideas that may feel irreconcilable.

Dr. John Berardi:

Today's topic, diet debates. We'll explore some of the most common ones, like plants versus animals for human health, plants versus animals for environmental health, the ideal macronutrients split, and more. We'll also explore a new concept called agnostic healthy eating, that offers a refreshing way to think about good nutrition without adding more dogma to the menu.

Dr. John Berardi:

My goal with this episode is to help you look at nutrition in a new way, so you can make better eating decisions for yourself, and better guide the decisions of those around you. So, let's get started.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

I write about how humans are meant to live. I write about the pervasive amnesia that is happening within human culture over the last 100 years.

Dr. John Berardi:

This is Dr. Paul Saladino, trained psychiatrist and physician nutrition specialist, author of the book "The Carnivore Code", and host of the Fundamental Health podcast.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

And I write about the process of humans remembering how they're supposed to eat, how they're supposed to live, and really starting to shed the amnesia of our current times.

Dr. John Berardi:

I'm going to start the show with Dr. Saladino, because this episode is all about exploring today's most heated diet debates, and his ideas are among the most controversial in the nutrition space today. So I wanted to lay out his arguments first, and then we'll visit with someone who thinks differently.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

I am going to say that I believe strongly that the inclusion of animal foods, eaten nose to tail in the human diet, was the single greatest catalyst in the formation of us as Homo sapien sapiens eventually, but previous to that, Homo Habibis and Homo erectus.

Dr. John Berardi:

Now, in his work, Dr. Saladino argues that the introduction of animal foods was a critical determinant in human evolution, and therefore it gives us some clues on how we should be eating today.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

There are so many nutrients found in animal meat and organs that are not found in plant foods. Things like creatine, carnitine, choline, carnosine. Vitamin K2 as a full spectrum of menaquinones, vitamin B12 is the one most people are familiar with. Significant amounts of riboflavin, minerals like zinc, copper, iron. Some of these are present in small amounts in plant foods, some of them are not present at all in plant foods. And when they are present in plant foods, they're very poorly bio-available.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

So, many postulate and agree with this hypothesis that I'm suggesting here, that you need nutrients. Pyridoxine, which is vitamin B6, niacin, which is vitamin B3, these are all crucial to the sudden expansion of the human brain. As was the inclusion of these foods that have more bio-availability, in terms of calories, in terms of protein, all of the fat-soluble vitamins, retinoic acid versus beta keratin.

Dr. John Berardi:

His contention here is that moving from a plant predominant diet to a more omnivorous one, lead to a big jump in brain size for early humans.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

And the story's fascinating. You can see the human brain sky rocket in size between two million years ago and today, from 500 CCs to 1,500 CCs, it tripled in size. And then you can see, right about two million years ago, when we were Homo Habibis and Homo erectus, the sudden appearance in the archeological record, of tools. Specifically Lamequian tools, Oldowan tools, and Acheulean tools, which are bifacial stone tools used for hunting.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

You can see cut marks on bones that are dated to that time, you can see injuries from hunting on bones from that time period. And you can see mass animal graves, suggesting things like a buffalo jump, where they heard animals off a cliff and thousands of animals, or hundreds of animals, die in mass, two million years ago.

Dr. John Berardi:

Now, you've probably heard that fire was the critical determinant here, that that was what allowed us to progress as humans. But Dr. Saladino has a different take on this.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

The most ancient evidence we have for fire is only 500,000 years ago, and our brains were growing two million years ago. So we may find evidence for fire a million years ago, but it doesn't look like fire was the catalyst. It seems to have been that hunting was the catalyst, and that the inclusion of these animal foods was the single greatest thing that made us human.

Dr. John Berardi:

This would be a good time to interrupt and say that Dr. Saladino isn't alone here. Nowadays, the Paleo anthropology community agrees mostly that eating more animal foods likely made it possible for humans to develop a larger brain size. But they are really careful to point out that eating animals doesn't really grow bigger brains by itself, rather eating animals makes bigger brains possible by allowing our gut size to shrink.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

This is called the expensive tissue hypothesis, which says our brains were possibly able to grow because our guts were able to shrink. Specifically our large intestines, our colons were able to shrink because we were no longer eating 20 to 30 pounds of food per day, that needed to be fermented for hours and hours and hours in the large intestine to make short chain fatty acids, which is how primates do it.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

You have to have a trade-off. If there's a certain amount of calories that a human is generally going to have access to, you can't just suddenly say, "You need 500 more calories today to grow this bigger brain". You can trade-off and have something need less calories, like a colon or a large bowel, because you have more nutrient-rich foods and animal foods.

Dr. John Berardi:

Okay, so maybe you're wondering why include all this discussion of evolutionary history. Well, Dr. Saladino believes...

Dr. Paul Saladino:

If you accept the premise that what we've done for the last two million years might inform the way that we should be living today, then I think it does give us some indication of that. If your brain or all of our brains evolved eating a certain amount of meat and organs, and the unique quantities of those quality bio-available nutrients, to somehow remove those is not a good idea suddenly.

Dr. John Berardi:

So just to recap, this here is part one of Dr. Saladino's nutritional thinking.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

Animal foods, eaten nose to tail, were the single greatest catalyst in humans becoming human, and are an integral, indispensable part of the human diet, incorrectly vilified over the last 100 years due to bad science. And that if we want to perform optimally as humans, there is no way to do that without including a significant amount of animal foods eaten nose to tail in our diet.

Dr. John Berardi:

And remember, part one isn't controversial. Part two, however...

Dr. Paul Saladino:

The second point is equally important. It's not an argument about whether plants are toxic, plants are toxic. Botanists accept that, mostly everyone accepts that plants are toxic. The only question is how toxic, and how well each of us is genetically equipped to detoxify the plants we're eating.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

Plants exist on a toxicity spectrum. There are more and less toxic parts of plants, and there are more and less toxic plants. And we know this. You don't go around eating plants that are toxic. There are many plants in the world that will fricking kill you. If you go into the wild and you start eating animals, 99.99% of animals, eaten nose to tail, are completely safe to eat for humans. They're nourishing. You can eat everything.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

You could eat a squirrel nose to tail, you could eat a duck nose to tail. You could eat a bison or a fox or a deer, nose to tail, and be 100% fine. But if you go into the wild, it is a very small percentage of plants that you can eat without some consideration of this, and not have massive immediate GI distress, or frank death, hallucinations, or really, really bad consequences. So the hierarchy of nutritional availability is very clear. Animal foods are superior.

Dr. John Berardi:

Now, let's be really clear here. Dr. Saladino is beginning to mount an argument for the removal of most plant foods from the human diet.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

Animal foods are treasured above plant foods across the board. Across the board. There are no successful vital hunter gatherer tribes living on this planet today who say, "You know what? We're not going to go hunt today because we have plenty of plants to eat". That doesn't happen. They're hunting animals. And if they don't have animals successfully hunted, they will use some plant foods, with a consideration of a toxicity spectrum, as "fall back foods", as survival foods.

Dr. John Berardi:

So this is part two of Dr. Saladino's nutritional thinking, that plant foods should be minimized, and when included, humans should only be eating the "less toxic varieties".

Dr. Paul Saladino:

Plants and animals have co-evolved for 450 million years, 500, 600 million years. Plants have needed to develop toxicities, they've needed to develop defense chemicals. And so the most highly defended parts of plants are the above ground parts of plants, and the roots. So the stems, the leaves, the seeds and the roots.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

Now, the fruit is different. Most plants, not all, but most plants are trying to get animals to consume the fruit, so they're not really trying to put a bunch of defense chemicals in the fruit.

Dr. John Berardi:

Of course, he's often asked what the most parts of plants are, and here's his answer.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

Seeds, nuts, grains and legumes, as they're all plant babies, as the most highly defended parts of the plant, are the most vulnerable, and they're the most highly defended. And this is corroborated by the medical literature. Those are full of oxalates and lectins, digestive enzyme inhibitors. I mean, some seeds are frankly toxic, and many of them will cause massive problems if not really, really detoxified in a strong way.

Dr. John Berardi:

When he's asked about the least toxic parts of plants...

Dr. Paul Saladino:

Their fruit. They're the parts of the plant that are okay getting eaten, and some of these are sweet, and some of them are non-sweet. And then there's honey, which is made by bees and fermented from the pollen. And then there's things like avocado or olive, that we don't think of as fruit, or squash. But the majority of them, I think those are great foods.

Dr. John Berardi:

Now, we should probably pause here and put everything he's said so far into context. So I'll let Dr. Saladino do that in his own words.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

Your ancestor's favored animals. They ate the animals nose to tail. They always favored animals. When animals were available, they shunned all other foods in favor of animals. There's good evidence from all sorts of currently living African tribes that that is the case. And they would eat plant foods as fall back foods, as sort of foods to fill in the gaps, they would collect berries and fruit.

Dr. John Berardi:

It might be worth reiterating that the animal part is pretty well accepted in the scientific community, although the plant part isn't. Some of the "toxins" he's called out have been shown to have positive effects on human health. Even more, an overwhelming number of large scale studies consistently show that humans tend to do better with a variety of plant foods in their diet. So his thoughts on vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes, aren't well supported when it comes to the human health literature. But let's move on from that, and take a look at part three of his nutritional thinking.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

Point number three is that the inclusion of two types of processed food are the single greatest drivers of chronic disease in our country over the last 100 years, and those two types of food are seed oils and processed sugars.

Dr. John Berardi:

Of course, everyone agrees about sugar.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

Most people will be able to say, yes, processed sugar isn't good for humans. And it's not the sugar itself, it's the problem that people overeat it.

Dr. John Berardi:

And when it comes to seed oils, here are a few examples of the kind that he's talking about.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

Things like omega-6 rich, polyunsaturated fatty acids in oils like soy bean, grape seed, canola, safflower, sunflower, peanut, et cetera. The combination of these two things-

Dr. John Berardi:

Meaning sugar and seed oils.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

... is a double whammy as well, because it does appear that seed oils, and these omega-6 rich oils with this oil linoleic acid, go toward making us less satiated. They break our satiety response at the level of our adipocytes. At the level of the mitochondria in our adipocytes, which are our fat cells. At the level of the ventromedial hypothalamus in the brain. At the level of other regions in the hypothalamus in the brain. And at the level of our peripheral tissues, even our muscles, play into this overall satiety equation.

Dr. John Berardi:

Most in nutrition agree that highly processed, high omega-6 seed oils, out of balance with, for example, the omega-3 rich oils, can be problematic.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

Yet, there are those in the plant based communities and in the scientific communities who will debate that seed oils are beneficial. And I will add, that mainstream cardiology in this country promotes evolutionarily inconsistent seed oils, because they lower LDL. So they do this very myopically, and they ignore things like oxidized phospholipids on AOB and oxidized LDL and [APLA 00:14:13]

Dr. John Berardi:

So here I want to let Dr. Saladino sort of recap parts two and three of his nutritional arguments.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

I would argue that many of the plants that we eat today are not species appropriate foods for humans. They've primarily been used as fall back foods, if at all, and they are not evolutionarily consistent foods for humans. But the idea is meat and organs are very evolutionarily consistent foods for humans. And then we say, okay, which plants are evolutionarily consistent? And most people will agree that seed oils and high fructose, corn syrup, other processed sugars are not evolutionarily consistent food for humans.

Dr. John Berardi:

And that's the main idea behind the carnivore diet, most paleo diets too. Pretty straight forward. Focus on animals, eliminate most plants, including things like vegetables, nuts, seeds, and definitely eliminate sugar and seed oils. Now, if you're wondering how this sort of ideology might actually translate into an eating plan, here's a typical say of eating for Dr. Saladino.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

I usually eat about one gram of protein per pound of body weight, and that means I eat about one and three quarter pounds of meat per day, which is about 175 grams of protein from meat. And I will eat meat of all sorts, from grass fed, grass finished, regeneratively raised animals. I will mix that meat with fat, because I do want animal fat in my diet. And some of the meat is fatty and has fat on it, and sometimes I just eat animal fat, like suet, which is the kidney fat from animals.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

And in addition to the meat and the fat, and cleaner sea salt, I will eat organs. And I generally eat three to six ounces of organs per day, and it's a mix of liver and heart, kidney, spleen, pancreas, thymus, whatever I've got. Because I think that humans have eaten organs for our entire existence as hominids, and they're important to get. There are many unique nutrients in organs that are not found in muscle meat.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

So meat fat, organs, and I do eat nose to tail. So I'll eat bone broth and connective tissue. And then if it's a day when I'm including carbohydrates, I will either eat one of the least toxic sources of carbohydrates in my diet. I will eat honey, which I think is an ancestrally consistent evolutionarily compatible carbohydrate, or I will eat fruit seasonally. I like berries in my diet. And occasionally I will eat squash, which is fruit, so it's a non-sweet fruit.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

Now, I structure my meals like this. I have two meals, no snacks, that are about six hours apart, so there is a time restricted feeding window. I eat in the morning and the early afternoon.

Dr. John Berardi:

I wanted to get a sense for how Dr. Saladino sort of saw his ideas fitting into the nutritional mainstream, and here's what he told me.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

This is a total re-conceptualization of these plant foods, and the hierarchy of value. And what have we been told? We've been told broccoli and kale are king, and I'm saying that is bologna. There needs to be a coup in the food kingdom. The grocery store needs a coup, right? The meat is the king, the liver is the king, and those guys are just peasants. They are subjects.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

And historically, they have been. There's a great meme that goes around, and it's a picture of King Henry the Eighth, and he says, "We had vegetarians in my day too, they were called peasants". And it's true. Historically, even in the last 500 years, the people who were in positions of power ate meat, and the people who were subjugated, wrongly, ate plant foods. The plant foods were second class citizen food. So why are we choosing to eat peasant food, slave food, survival food? Why are we told that survival food is the best food for humans? That's completely wrong. That's everything getting messed up.

Dr. David Katz:

If you really want to distill it all down to one word, it's balance. There is native balance for the kind of dietary pattern that's good for any kind of animal.

Dr. John Berardi:

Now here I'd like to introduce Dr. David Katz, founder and former director of Yale University's Yale Griffin Prevention Research Center, past president of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine, and president and founder of the non-profit True Health initiative.

Dr. David Katz:

We are a kind of animal. And if you move toward a balance that's healthy and sustaining for the kind of animal we are, it's good. If you move out of that balance, it's bad.

Dr. John Berardi:

So if there were a spectrum, and eating mostly animals was on one end, and eating mostly plants was on the other, Dr. Saladino and Dr. Katz would kind of represent the two poles. So I thought it would be useful to outline Dr. Katz's ideas now.

Dr. David Katz:

And then the two key tips for moving toward balance would be go from lots of highly processed food to stuff direct from nature. If you can tell where it grew or came from in the natural world, that's a good thing. So move along that axis, the further you can go the better. And since we tend to eat too many animal foods, and they come at a high cost to health and the environment, and the way we treat our fellow species, three axis that matter there, move from animal foods to plant foods. Vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, lentils, nuts and seeds. And if you get those couple of things right, you can't go too far wrong.

Dr. John Berardi:

There you have a short summary of how Dr. Katz himself eats, and how he thinks about eating for optimal health.

Dr. David Katz:

I've wrestled with this over the course of my career more extensively than most. I did a paper in 2014 at the request of the editors at the Annual Review of Public Health, entitled "Can we say what diet is best for health?"

Dr. John Berardi:

If you're curious, this paper is actually freely available online by searching for "Can we say what diet is best for health?"

Dr. David Katz:

And my conclusion was actually the basic theme of dietary pattern that is optimal for the human animal is perfectly clear. Michael Pollan expressed it in seven words, "Eat food", by which he meant real food. So minimally processed. "Not too much, mostly plants".

Dr. John Berardi:

In Michael Pollan's book, "The omnivore's dilemma", he posits this as sort of a simple rubric. "Eat food, not too much, mostly plants".

Dr. David Katz:

And then there are lots of variants on that theme, that all have supporting evidence.

Dr. John Berardi:

I've followed Dr. Katz's work for years, and one thing that he always talks about is the removal of dogma from nutritional conversations. And here he brings that up again with some really good examples.

Dr. David Katz:

I don't think there should be dogma on the menu. There's a lot we don't know, in terms of details. We know a lot about the general theme of optimal eating, but most of the ardent claims of, "My specific diet can beat your specific diet", are just somebody trying to sell something.

Dr. David Katz:

If I may, just to step into my current vocation as founder and CEO of a startup company called Diet ID, we have invented a new way to access diet there, and to help coach people to optimal dietary intake. But we're agnostic about diet types, so the diet types in our map range from paleo and low carb, to vegan and everything in between, including Mediterranean somewhere in the middle, but pescatarian, flexitarian, dash, all of the diets you can think of.

Dr. David Katz:

And the simple fact is, using an objective measure of diet quality, we use the Healthy Eating Index 2015, which is robustly correlated with all-cause mortality total chronic disease risk, we can stratify all these different types of diets into 10 tiers of quality. When you get to that top tier, tier 10, they all look more alike than different, because all of the ultra-processed foods are gone, all of the highly processed foods are gone, it's all real food.

Dr. John Berardi:

So with all this in mind, I asked Dr. Katz how one might think about choosing the best diet or the best way of eating.

Dr. David Katz:

I think best way to personalize nutrition is to say, what is native to you, what's comfortable to you? What is your preference, what are your taste buds rooting for? And do you have any particular objectives, health objectives, performance objectives? Because there's a massive amount of peer reviewed literature that can help us sift the available diets to say these are the three, four, five, seven, where there's the most evidence to suggest they will help with blank, fill in the blank.

Dr. David Katz:

I want to prevent diabetes, reverse diabetes, fix my hypotension, treat my coronary disease, avoid coronary disease, reduce inflammation, optimize my immune health. Whatever it may be, you fill in that blank, we can show you the options, and then you can say, "Well, among those options, the one I like best is this one. That looks like food my family and I would actually enjoy eating".

Dr. David Katz:

And there at the end, that's not a gratuitous addition, family is really important. When we diet alone, generally, we live it together, and I think eating should be part of life. I think it should just be configured into lifestyle. And what that means is it's so much better if you think about a way of approaching diet that's a relationship you actually want to share with the people you love. And when you want the strength of unity, you want pleasure from eating food that you actually enjoy, and you want the pleasure of good health.

Dr. John Berardi:

Yet, as mentioned above, when it comes to his personal nutritional choices, he leans toward a plant predominant diet.

Dr. David Katz:

What I think we can channel is priorities, as citizens of the world. I would argue I have three. First is, as a health professional I'm very concerned with health, what are the direct human health effects. And frankly, I think it's perfectly clear, open your own mouths, look at your teeth. Carnivores do not have all these molars. They just don't. We are not carnivorous animals. Our canines are probably more for display than anything, like our fellow primates.

Dr. David Katz:

You look at our lineage, you look at chimpanzees, gorillas, plant predominant diets. So, our lineage, yes, there can be some meat in the mix, but you go to our early hominids, you go to pre-hominid ancestors, plant predominant. You look at our anatomy and physiology, our gastral intestinal tract, nothing like the carnivore.

Dr. David Katz:

Now, not like an herbivore either, we are omnivorous, we have choices. I would start there, say anatomically, physiologically, constitutionally we are omnivores. And that's probably useful information in the same way that you

really ought to feed a horse hay and grass and oats, and not hunks of meat, and you really have to feed lions in a zoo hunks of meat and not hay and oats and grass, because of their adaptations.

Dr. David Katz:

If adaptations matter to every kind of animal on the planet, it is a unique Homo sapien arrogance to think adaptations don't matter in our case. I think they do, so I do think it's a good place to start.

Dr. John Berardi:

So just to recap, this is his first main idea, that humans evolved eating a plant predominant, omnivorous diet, and that this kind of diet is optimal for human health.

Dr. David Katz:

And then given that, given that really we have choices, I then think we need to honor choices which derive from our personal priorities. So again, I have three. One is direct human health effects. Second is how we treat our fellow creatures. I have dogs, I love them, they're my best friends. I have a horse, I love him, we spend many happy hours together in the woods and trails, and jumping over jumps and all that.

Dr. David Katz:

The idea that these guys are my friends and I communicate with them, and I look into their eyes and I understand their feelings, emotions, fears, anxieties, delight. And something just like them, that's my dinner, I'm just not comfortable with that, and I haven't been for a very long time.

Dr. David Katz:

Now, that's my personal priority. You may feel the same way, you may feel very differently. But I prefer to eat fewer animals, because eating animals at a massive scale imposes cruelty and abuse on animals that can think and feel, and know pain and joy and fear, a lot like we do.

Dr. John Berardi:

And this is Dr. Katz second main idea, that eating a plant predominant diet maybe better for our fellow creatures.

Dr. David Katz:

And then the third, and honestly I think this is the signature issue of our time, environmental foot print. The single largest reason to argue against animal food predominant diets, beautifully articulated in the EAT-Lancet report on food, people and the planet, is that the carbon foot print associated with animal food production is massively higher than plants. Water utilization, massively higher. Land use, massively higher. Contaminants, pollution, massively higher. On and on it goes.

Dr. David Katz:

We simply cannot do it at the scale of eight billion hungry Homo sapiens or more, and that's where we are now. I have close friends and colleagues who are among the world's leading experts on the paleo diet. A person who particularly comes to mind is S. Boyd Eaton. You look up the paleolithic diet, or paleolithic nutrition in the peer review literature, two names are salient above all. Eaton and Connor. [inaudible 00:26:59]

Dr. David Katz:

And Boyd has said, "I have great appreciation for what we do and don't know about our stone age diet. I certainly think we ate meat, I like meat, I think it's good for people to eat the right kinds of meat, but the modern world can't do it.

Eight billion hungry people simply cannot do it". Originally it was all about direct human health effects, and I followed the evidence where it lead, and it lead in the direction of plant predominant, but no dogma. You don't have to be vegan, certainly. The Mediterranean diet is not a vegan diet.

Dr. John Berardi:

Just to interject here, Dr. Katz brings up the Mediterranean diet because he believes that traditional diets offer important clues about healthy eating.

Dr. David Katz:

One of the [inaudible 00:27:44] Mediterranean diet again is that it's traditional. Nobody made it up, it's not anybody's pet theory, it's rooted in heritage, as my friends at [inaudible 00:27:52] like to say. And health derived from heritage offers you the benefit that you can't get from no randomized clinical trial, because we have no RCPs that are multiple generations long.

Dr. John Berardi:

Yet, his use of the Mediterranean diet is just an example.

Dr. David Katz:

My affinity for the Mediterranean diet is just illustrative. It's not the diet, it's just a diet. Typical Asian diet, the Okinawan diet, famously associated with longevity.

Dr. John Berardi:

While Dr. Katz continues to talk about traditional, omnivorous diets, in the context of human health, he's long thought more about...

Dr. David Katz:

The cruelty and abuse of factory farming, and the massive environmental foot print of animal food predominant diets. And I think that last one is the most important issue, because to be perfectly blunt about it, there are no healthy people on an uninhabitable planet, and we are rather blindly blundering our way in that very direction.

Dr. John Berardi:

So the way Dr. Katz prefers to eat is pretty simple. He chooses a diet rich in...

Dr. David Katz:

Vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, lentils, nuts and seeds.

Dr. John Berardi:

But as a specialist in public health, he's also careful to include more than just food in his discussion of how to live the healthiest life.

Dr. David Katz:

I had to think when I was president of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine, how do I synopses this? Basically turned them into a little chant or a diddy over the years, feet forks, fingers, sleep, stress, and love. And I had lots of opportunity to take that show on the road. So the order isn't necessarily important.

Dr. David Katz:

but feet, physical activity. Forks, dietary pattern. Fingers, do not bring tobacco to your lips, don't bring excessive alcohol to your lips, avoidance of toxins, basically. Sleep, we need to get enough. Stress, we shouldn't have too much. And love, and by love I mean social connections.

Dr. John Berardi:

Okay, I'm going to take a little break here so I can talk about one of our sponsors, Precision Nutrition. While it might feel weird to have another set of nutrition ideas thrown into the mix of this episode, I want to let you know that Precision Nutrition is different. Their nutrition paradigm is completely agnostic, whether you're plant based or keto, or high carb or carnivore, they can help.

Dr. John Berardi:

But you don't even need to care about the names diets for Precision Nutrition to help. That's because they offer something more, something they call deep health. Now, deep health is defined as a balanced diet of fresh whole foods, sufficient exercise combined with genuine rest, access to clean air and clean water, real human connection and sincere emotional expression, purpose, joy and using your life in the service of them.

Dr. John Berardi:

So it's not just about how people eat, although that's part of it, it's also about how they move, think, respond, solve problems, and exist in the world around them. If that sounds deep, well that's the point. And it's what's made them the biggest nutrition coaching, education, and software company in the world.

Dr. John Berardi:

If you'd like to learn more about Precision Nutrition, including their number one rated nutrition certification program, plus get some incredible free resources to help you eat better, transform your health, maybe even help others do the same, please visit [www.precisionnutrition.com/jb](http://www.precisionnutrition.com/jb), my initials. Free stuff awaits, plus early access to PN's programs, and a nice discount. Again, that's [www.precisionnutrition.com/jb](http://www.precisionnutrition.com/jb). All right, back to the show.

Dr. John Berardi:

Look at a political map of the United States, and what do you see? Red states and blue states, us and them. However, no state ever votes just red or blue. Don't worry, I'll tie this back to nutrition in a minute, I promise. For now though, let's look at the 202 election.

Dr. John Berardi:

In the bluest democratic voting states, only six out of every 10 voters voted blue, which means about four out of every 10 voters in the blue states voted red. Likewise, in the reddest republican voting states, the numbers look similar. Only six out of every 10 voters voted red, and four out of every 10 voters, again in the red states, voted blue. Yet these types of binary, winner take all, red versus blue maps persist.

Dr. John Berardi:

Now, in 2009, Dr. Abraham Rutchick of Cal State university studied this phenomenon, presenting red versus blue maps to study participants. And they found three significant things that I think you'll find interesting. First, red versus blue maps make people see the country as more polarized than it really is. Even acutely it shifts their attitude towards disagreement. Second, red versus blue maps worsen stereotypes about the political beliefs of a state's residents. And third, red versus blue maps makes some question the value of voting in the first place if one isn't in their states majority.

Dr. John Berardi:

But they didn't stop there. They also presented study participants a different kind of map. Not a red versus blue map, but a purple one, where each state is a shade of purple. If a state votes more democratic, it just shows up as a bluer shade of purple, and if a state votes more republican, it shows up as a redder shade of purple, again. By the way, if you want to see what this looks like, just search the web for purple states and you can have a look.

Dr. John Berardi:

So, what happened when they showed the purple map to study participants? Well, as you might have guessed, it decreased their perceptions of polarization. Decreased stereotyping, and increased voter confidence. So presenting red versus blue not only exaggerates polarization where it doesn't really exist, it worsens it, while presenting shades of purple is both a more accurate way to present voting trends, and leads to less polarity.

Dr. John Berardi:

When learning about this research, I got to wondering, am I more of a red and blue thinker, or more of a purple thinker? Maybe you're wondering the same thing. If so, here's a quick test. Listening to the last two segments, hearing from Dr. Saladino and Dr. Katz, what did you notice? How did they make you feel? Were you frustrated that these two experts, both articulate, convincing guys, couldn't seem to agree on anything? Or were you pleased by the amount of agreement between their recommendations?

Dr. John Berardi:

If you're in the frustrated camp, that may be because you're doing too much red versus blue thinking. Perhaps focusing on the differences is blinding you to the commonalities. Makes me wonder what you might find if you were to go back and listen to the first two segments again, thinking in terms of agreement and overlap, if you were to start thinking in shades of purple.

Dr. John Berardi:

Dr. Saladino and Dr. Katz are two great orators, with great stories and well-practiced pitches. And we, as humans, are all suckers for great speakers with great stories. So if you got sucked in to one or the other, that's totally normal. Yet I'd like to bring you back out, help you find where these two guys agree. And let's start with their shared belief that learning more about how early humans ate can give us some clues into how we might consider eating. Here's Dr. Saladino's take on that.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

If you accept the premise that what we've done for the last two million years might inform the way that we should be living today, then I think it does give us some indication of that.

Dr. John Berardi:

And here's Dr. Katz's take on that.

Dr. David Katz:

If adaptations matter to every kind of animal on the planet, it is a unique Homo sapien arrogance to think that adaptations don't matter in our case. I think they do, so I do think it's a good place to start.

Dr. John Berardi:

So they have that in common right from the start. Next, when it comes to how the human body evolved, Dr. Katz says...

Dr. David Katz:

We are not carnivorous animals. If you look at our lineage, you look at chimpanzees, gorillas, plant predominant diets. So, our lineage, yes there can be some meat in the mix, but you go to our early hominids, you go to pre-hominid ancestors, plant predominant. You look at our anatomy and physiology, our gastrointestinal tract, nothing like a carnivore. Now, not like a herbivore either. We are omnivorous.

Dr. John Berardi:

And Dr. Saladino says this.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

We can look at the proceeding 90 million years of primate evolution and see no change in the size of the brain. There is essentially the same size brain in chimps and bonobos for 90 million years of them eating mostly plants. They eat a whole foods plant based diet, and their brains stayed very small for 90 million years. And then something happened with us, it appears we began eating more meat and our brains very quickly grew in size. And I think there is a lot of evidence to suggest that that was due to the sudden inclusion in our diets of unique nutrients that were not present before.

Dr. John Berardi:

Now, although we start to see some divergence here, Dr. Katz is starting to angle for his plant based preference, and Dr. Saladino is starting to angle toward his animal based preference, let's be clear that they're saying the exact same thing. Humans evolved eating an omnivorous diet, plants and animals. There's no debate about this. Not between these two individuals, and not in the anthropology world. Humans evolved eating plants and animals. We're designed to seek and enjoy both, and we were formed from diets that included both.

Dr. John Berardi:

So that's the second thing they have in common. Now, let's talk about the third thing they share in common. They both believe that highly processed food is problematic from a health perspective.

Dr. David Katz:

Go from lots of highly processed food, that would be stuff that glows in the dark, basically. Franken-food. To stuff direct from nature. If you can tell where it grew or came from in the natural world, that's a good thing.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

The inclusion of two types of processed food are the single greatest drivers of chronic disease in our country over the last 100 years, and those two types of food are seed oils and processed sugars. And most people will be able to say, yes, processed sugar isn't good for humans. And it's not the sugar itself, it's the problem that people overeat it, and they become hypercaloric, which for humans is a problem.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

It's much more difficult to become hypercaloric if you are not eating processed foods. And those processed foods are often enriched with processed sugars, but also often enriched with processed seed oils. Things like omega-6 rich, polyunsaturated fatty acids in oils like soy bean, grape seed, canola, safflower, sunflower, peanut, et cetera.

Dr. John Berardi:

Despite their emphasis on particular features within their own preferred eating patterns, we have some pretty big agreement here on healthier ways to eat. If Michael Pollan's advice is to...

Dr. David Katz:

"Eat food, not too much, mostly plants".

Dr. John Berardi:

... then Dr. Katz and Dr. Saladino agree on the first, "Eat food", minimally processed food. And they also agree on the second, that eating too much, which usually happens when we're eating highly processed food, is problematic for health. It's only the third where they disagree, and I'd agree that disagreement is more values based than health based. Dr. Katz, for example is very clear about how his eating choices are at least two thirds based on his own values systems.

Dr. David Katz:

I've applied these additional lenses over recent years as I've learned more and more about the cruelty and abuse of factory farming, and the massive environmental foot print of animal food predominant diets. Now, that's my personal priority.

Dr. John Berardi:

And Dr. Saladino's arguments can sometimes sound more like ideology than physiology.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

The meat is the king, the liver is the king, and those guys are just peasants, they are subjects. And historically, they have been. There's a great meme that goes around, and it's a picture of King Henry the Eighth, and he says, "We had vegetarians in my day too, they were called peasants". And it's true. Historically, even in the last 500 years, the people who were in positions of power ate meat. Plant foods were second class citizen food.

Dr. John Berardi:

Back to the red versus blue thing, this plant versus animal debate, it's definitely a point of departure. But upon close inspection, it feels more like a philosophical debate than a physiological disagreement. When it comes to individual health, based on everything I've read in the research, I'm convinced that most people do best when they split the difference. Eating a diet that borrows from Dr. Katz's menu...

Dr. David Katz:

Vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, lentils, nuts and seeds.

Dr. John Berardi:

... and from Dr. Saladino's.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

Meat and organs.

Dr. John Berardi:

So, I'll adjust Michael Pollan's advice to say this, "Eat food", meaning food that is minimally processed, close to its natural state. "Not too much", which is usually accomplished by eating minimally processed food. And a satisfying mix of plants and animals.

Dr. John Berardi:

Okay, so this is where we're going to end part one of this three part series. In part one, which you just listened to, we covered what is perhaps the biggest diet debate of the decade, plants versus animals for human health, and possible ways to reconcile the two. In part two, we'll cover two other debates, plants versus animals for environmental health, and the ideal macronutrients split, looking for common ground among these too. And in part three, we'll cover a new concept, called agnostic healthy eating, that offers a refreshing way to think about good nutrition without adding more dogma to the menu.

Dr. John Berardi:

So I hope you'll come back and listen to the rest of this series. My goal is to help you look at nutrition in a new way, so that you can make better eating decisions for yourself, and better guide the decisions of those around you.

Dr. John Berardi:

Before we end, I want to make sure you don't miss out on something. Editing this show was sad for me because I did in depth interviews with each of the guests, most of them lasting 90 minutes or more, and we had to whittle them down, which means a lot of insights were left on the cutting room floor. However, we're making those full interviews available right now, for you, totally free, at the Dr. John Berardi Show website.

Dr. John Berardi:

These interviews really are treasure troves of information, and to access them, as well as a transcript of this main episode you just listened to, pop over to [www.drjohnberardishow.com](http://www.drjohnberardishow.com). Also, one more thing, if you like what we're doing with the show, please consider reviewing it on Apple podcasts. Clicking that little subscribe button on Apple, Google, or wherever you listen to us, also makes a difference. So reviewing and subscribing, it helps a lot. Thanks for considering.

Dr. John Berardi:

Before signing off, I'd like to thank our production team. Marjorie Korn, my research partner and co-writer on the show, Martin DeSouza, our producer, and the team at Sound On Studios, who take care of our sound management, design and editing. You can learn more about them at [soundonsoundoff.com](http://soundonsoundoff.com). And thanks to you for listening.