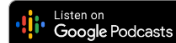




# Diet Debates and Purple States

## PART 3



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Brian St. Pierre:

If you have to choose between being right or being helpful, choose helpful, being right and winning, but it doesn't actually help the person move forward or make better decisions like what did you actually accomplish? So yeah, we got to the truth and no one was any better for it.

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. Today's topic, diet debates, part three. In part one of this series 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 covered plants versus animals for environmental health and the ideal macronutrients clip, looking for common ground among these also, and here 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.

Matt Fitzgerald:

It's agnostic healthy eating. It's a term I came up with.

Dr. John Berardi:

This is Matt Fitzgerald, a high-level endurance athlete, a coach, and an award-winning author. He's written more than 20 books, including Diet Cults, which is the book I wanted to talk to him about today.

Matt Fitzgerald:

Here's how I came at this, as part of my work, I'm telling athletes what to eat and anyone who's in a position of telling other people what to eat and you know this very well gets a lot of blow back. There're competing opinions out there. So, you really believe that you have good advice to give to the person you're telling what to eat, but that person, assuming they don't live in a closet in your home is being exposed to a lot of other diet information like in books, on websites from people they meet. And a lot of it is contrary to what you're saying. And I've had this experience all the time where I feel like folks, this is really basic you should be persuaded by what I'm telling you, but they'll come back to me with no, someone told me I should only eat things that start with the letter M and I just got frustrated by that. And I decided at some point to do something about it, to sort of like take the discussion to metal level.

Matt Fitzgerald:

So instead of just chipping away, trying to persuade people that I'm giving them good advice on how to eat, to sort of step back and ask and attempt to answer question, like, why are his people so irrational when it comes to thinking about food? Why is it so hard to get people to buy into and act upon good sound advice with diet? And I felt like one of the reasons I was fighting and losing battle is that the named diets they have a shtick. First of all, they've got a name. So, I didn't want to become the very folks I was competing against.

Dr. John Berardi:

Right. So, I gave my diet the most boring thoughts.

Matt Fitzgerald:

Exactly. Stuck to my principles. I only halfway sold out. I do have a positive agenda in the book. I'm not just pulling back the curtain and exposing the diet cults for what they are. And so, the positive agenda is I want to offer an alternative for

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people like me, even before I knew the first thing about nutrition, I was turned off by all of the fad diets. I just smelled a rat. It didn't matter what the substance was. It was just the carnival barker way in which they were like marketed to me. I'm like, "I don't care what you're selling. I don't like the act." I think there's a lot of other people like me, it's not anything goes, they care about their health or fitness. They want to eat in a healthy, sustainable way, but they are turned off by the fads. So that's what I'm offering as an alternative would, my agnostic healthy eating, just what I'm trying to do is add some sizzle to it, to give it some of the sex appeal of a fad diet without shifting it off of its scientific foundation. And also, practical foundation.

Dr. John Berardi:

I wanted to know the main criteria for this idea of agnostic healthy eating. And this is what Matt told me.

Matt Fitzgerald:

Distinction that I do pay attention to is processed versus unprocessed. I may consider, or at least be aware of whether something I choose to eat is high-carb or a cover comes from an animal versus a plant source. But that's not the basis of my decision.

Dr. John Berardi:

But beyond that distinction, which we've talked about a lot in this series, Matt says that individual preferences matter most.

Matt Fitzgerald:

One of the ways that I try to help people to get perspective on what's wrong with the fad diets is I explain to them, here's what will happen if you go into the office of a fad diet [inaudible 00:05:47]. They will give you the diet without asking you anything about what you currently eat or why. And they'll say, good luck with it. It's one size fits all. That is the polar opposite of what I do. I don't talk a lot about my philosophy. I talk to them about what they eat now, because what I want to do is change as little as possible because presumably they eat the way they do now for a reason. So, my only goal is to help them get the results they want in the straightest line that we can come up with. So, don't change anything you don't need to change. So, there can't possibly be a shtick or a philosophy really. There is, I guess, underlying, but I'm not even really thinking about it.

Dr. John Berardi:

I pressed Matt for an example here because I felt like he was being a little vague. And that's when he talked about rice.

Matt Fitzgerald:

If I see someone who's to go back to the same example, like they eat fair number of grains and they're almost all processed. I'll say, "What you like rice?" Brown rice is an acquired taste. Trust me, I made the switch. It's doable. Let's try brown rice instead of white. That's what I'll do with you.

Dr. John Berardi:

Now. I just want to point out that Matt is not arguing here that white rice is bad rather, he's just giving an example of how he might, based on someone's goals and preferences, help them move toward eating foods that are less processed, but he also brings up this idea to counterbalance any drive towards perfectionism.

Matt Fitzgerald:

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I think it's just a salutary to people to understand that there's such a thing as good enough. First of all, who's most likely to eat a whole sleeve of cookies. Someone who eats one cookie a day, or someone who tries their damndest to never eat a cookie. So, aiming toward perfect is you're already in trouble. And first of all, if you can define perfect in terms of diet, you're lacking a little bit of that humility that came up earlier in our conversation. So, on the one hand, I encourage people to understand that there is such a thing as good enough. On the other hand, I also, at the same time encourage people to understand diet as a process. I talked to a lot of elite athletes about how they eat, and it's very interesting, what part of what makes them elite is that not just that they're talented, but they're really tuned into their bodies.

Matt Fitzgerald:

And if you take a 35-year-old elite marathoner and you ask, "How do you eat now?" And they tell you, then you ask, "How did you eat seven years ago, nine years ago?" And it will be different and it will be different for specific reasons, not radically, but they're always ... Their bodies are changing and they're paying attention and they're changing, but they're also, learning things, trying things, incorporating things, not like pin balling from one extreme to the other like so many of us do. So those two things, there is such a thing as good enough, but the journey is never complete and the journey can be fun. If you look at it as an exploration sort of discovering yourself, it's just a way of walking through life.

Dr. John Berardi:

Brian St. Pierre director of nutrition for Precision Nutrition often describes the ideal starting point for most people the same way Matt does.

Brian St. Pierre:

I still think of it as pretty normal eating, just with more minimally processed whole foods.

Dr. John Berardi:

So, let's pause there. If you've listened to all three parts of this series, you'll notice that no matter who I talk to, no matter how far apart their ideas seem, they all place a real primacy on eating fewer, highly processed foods and eating more foods that are close to their natural state. So maybe that's what most people should be working harder at.

Brian St. Pierre:

But when you've been in the field long enough, you see people in all domains of the fitness industry or in the nutrition industry, whether it's whole foods plant-based or vegetarian or carnivores, there are people trying to proselytize from all corners. So, if they're all seeing tremendous results from all of these vastly different approaches that tells me that it's not the specific approach that's successful, right? It might be for that individual person, but in general, there are some underlying elements at play that are helping all of these people on vastly different eating routines to be successful.

Dr. John Berardi:

If we think back to episode one, the purple states concept and look for what these eating patterns share in common.

Brian St. Pierre:

We know that regardless, there's still a minimal amount of protein, right? That needs to be consumed and growing evidence that they believed minimum that's been posed for a long time is actually not even enough, particularly if you're active exercising. So, we know that protein is key for a whole host of things, for helping you with your hunger and satiety, for regeneration and recovery, for hormone production, you name it, immune health. So, protein is a key piece, no matter what, whether you're low-carb or low-fat, especially if you're fully plant-based. So, you've got to make sure you're getting in sources of lysine, like beans, right? So, if you're not aware of or being coached on executing this, well, it

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can go poorly, but if you're doing it well, getting enough protein is very viable, but it's also key to it being successful. It's key to low carb-being successful. It's key to a whole host of things.

Brian St. Pierre:

From there, I'd say virtually every successful approach emphasizes minimally processed whole foods and de-emphasizes highly processed foods, right. I don't know of too many successful approaches long-term that are emphasizing highly processed ones. So minimally processed whole foods. Now, I would generally say, most approaches emphasize vegetables, right? Get in plenty of veggies or, and leaving some fruits, but at least get in plenty of vegetables in particular. I think those are when it comes to nutritional rules perspective. I think those are probably the biggest three that come to mind, that crossover virtually any approach. And then I think there are some smaller pieces like that. Like, "Oh, everyone needs some certain amount of particular fats," but do I ascribe a certain amount of particular fats to being an underlying reason why all these things are successful? Probably not. I think I would ascribe more to the minimally processed and to plenty of protein and plenty of plants [inaudible 00:12:12].

Dr. John Berardi:

So, I wondered why are people always looking for something more.

Brian St. Pierre:

Part of it I imagine is some level of disbelief that it can be quote-unquote, like so simple. When everyone else, all these other experts with PhDs and books are saying, no, you've got to do intermittent fasting, or you got to do keto, or you got to do carnivores, or you have to do. And I think that's my big struggle with is you don't have to do any of those things, but you can do any of those things.

Dr. John Berardi:

Now, Brian thinks we get into this kind of situation because of perverse incentives on both sides. First, the famous diet doctors have a lot to gain when they are contrarian or come up with something different.

Brian St. Pierre:

When you see other people in industry who push certain narratives, because it leads to a certain agenda for them, right? You talk about an incentive structure, well, having a novel or seemingly novel or a sexy idea. There's an incentive to do that, right? Because you got a book, you get products, you get to make money being middle of the road, selling a book about eating fruits and vegetables and plenty of proteins, probably not going to be a big seller.

Dr. John Berardi:

And on the consumer side.

Brian St. Pierre:

I think part of it is, it doesn't sound different enough from stuff they've already heard. And psycho, I've heard that before, and I'm still not where I want to be. In my opinion, there's a disconnect between what you know and what you do. It's about turning what you already know oftentimes into what you reliably do, right? The difference I think between me and like, say someone who's looking for a solution is I'm already doing those normal, but slightly better things on just a regular reliable basis. And if we could help people do that to me, that solves it.

Dr. John Berardi:

Dr. Katz makes this really interesting point.



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Dr. David Katz:

The places around the world where people benefit the most from diet, there is no news about diet, no news. You should not need another diet book, ours or anybody else's. If you need a diet book, that is your problem because where diet does the most good, nobody is waiting for somebody to come along and tell them how to eat. They eat the way their grandparents and great-grandparents and their grandparents ate. It's a traditional diet.

Dr. John Berardi:

Another thing about traditional diets is that they're easy to follow, because they recognize each person's unique history, preferences, and cultural context.

Dr. David Katz:

That's the other thing, agnostic healthy eating. Remember I describe it as a high-quality version of normal. It ain't hard, again that's why I say, tweak don't overhaul. Let's start with where you are now.

Dr. John Berardi:

You had people often look for solutions that are radical and sometimes magical. Have you ever knocked on wood? You know, if you say something that seems to attempt the fates, like despite this COVID pandemic raging on our whole family is still in good health, then you knock on wood to, ward off the fates from delivering COVID to your family. Well, knocking on wood is one of the most common examples in Western culture of what's called magical thinking. And it's actually kind of a two for one in the magical thinking game. First, it implies that you merely saying something positive with your words could trigger the universe to deliver bad fortune. So that's the first piece of magic. And second it suggests that physically knocking on a wooden object could protect you from such a thing happening. So that's the second piece of magic.

Dr. John Berardi:

Now in the early 1990s, scientists started getting really interested in magical thinking, considering how to define it and what conditions make it more likely. In one study, they even measured knocking on wood, about a hundred students visited Dr. Georgia Keenan's research lab at Tel Aviv university. And they were asked a series of questions designed to elicit one of those kinds of knock on wood moments. Don't worry, I'll tie this back to nutrition in a minute for now let's talk more about Dr. Keenan's study. Now, some students came in on a normal day, considered a low stress condition, and others came in 30 minutes before a scheduled exam, which was considered high stress, also students were assessed using something called the desirability for control scale. So, this is a questionnaire which helps describe the extent to which someone feels the need to control people or decisions or events in their environment versus just going with the flow or following others.

Dr. John Berardi:

It turns out that both high stress conditions and a high desire for control lead to more superstitious behavior. So, more knocks on the wooden table, a pole put together by the television show 60 Minutes showed that although only two out of every 10 Americans say they are quote-unquote somewhat, or quote-unquote very superstitious six out of 10 Americans, knock on wood to prevent unwanted things from happening. But people don't just turn to superstitions or magical thinking or magical rituals in low stakes situations. For example, Dr. Eric Tangerang of Memorial university in St. John's Newfoundland studied 800 Ghanaians during the 2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa. Now the outbreak was massive and had a 50% fatality rate. And although most people had access to good, modern, scientific thinking on the virus and could answer questions about it accurately. A huge percentage of people started this practice of praying over hot salt water, drinking some, and then bathing in it.



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Dr. John Berardi:

You see, they believe this magical ritual to be an effective vaccine against Ebola, even though doctors and scientists continually debunk the myth. Another study with Dr. Keenan, the guy who did the, "Knock on wood," study found that during the Gulf War Israelis and cities at higher risk of Scud missile attacks were more likely to do superstitious things like stepping into a bomb shelter with their right foot first versus their left foot.

Dr. John Berardi:

Bottom line. When there's a sense of uncertainty, maybe even danger, when there's stress, when there's little access to logical or scientific consensus, people look to magic as they grasp for control, which is maybe why many of us gloss over ideas like agnostic healthy eating, which we've been talking about in this episode. Like sure, unprocessed foods, enough protein, fruits and veggies don't eat too much. But if I could just nail down the perfect ratio of saturated to unsaturated fats, if I could just get my blood ketones in the right range, if I could just find the right dose of curcumin or resveratrol, if I could just sip this special amino acid drink during workouts, if I could just get rid of all animal foods, or all vegetable foods or all carbs, or all fats. Then I'll feel some sense of control, some sense of doing the right thing, some sense of being okay.

Dr. John Berardi:

Okay, I'm going to take a little break here so I can talk about one of our sponsors, Precision Nutrition. Well, it may 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 carnivores, they can help. But you don't even need to care about the name diets for Precision Nutrition to help that's because they offer something more, something they called 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. 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.

Dr. John Berardi:

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. 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 PMs programs and a nice discount. Again, that's [www.precisionnutrition.com/jb](http://www.precisionnutrition.com/jb). All right, back to the show.

Dr. David Katz:

It's not generally about the food. It's people aren't eating ice cream at night and drinking wine while they're watching a movie because they think man, this is so awesome for me. I'm going to be so jacked when I wake up, no one is sitting there telling themselves this story that what they're doing is beneficial. People eat for a whole host of reasons other than I want to be ripped. Even if I want to live a long and healthy life, right? That's like a long distant way off.

Dr. David Katz:

And we use nutrition or we use food to manage a whole bunch of other things, to solve all kinds of other problems, to cope with stress or shame or guilt, or right now to help cope with the unknown, right? Like, am I going to be on lockdown again? And I will go to see my parents at thanksgiving. I'm like, "Oh, this is a nerving, I'm going to have an extra glass of wine," but no one's doing that thinking. And this is like super good for me, but it's making me feel better

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right now. So, I think part of the issue is isn't knowledge. The issue is helping people to develop other skills that allow them to put that knowledge into work.

Dr. John Berardi:

While most people arguing about nutrition. Talk a lot about the food, the proteins, the carbs, the fats, or the plants and the animals, Dr. Stephan Guyenet, a biochemist, neuroscientist, and author of the Hungry Brain. Often places his focus elsewhere on our eating behaviors, because for most of us eating too much is a bigger problem than not getting our macronutrient ratios just right.

Dr. Stephan Guyenet:

We just are not fully conscious rational beings. That's not how the brain is set up. There's a lot of stuff that's going on in the brain that is beyond our conscious awareness and that stuff at the lowest level is just like the brain regulating your heart rate and your breathing rate and your blood pressure and temperature and all the stuff that's completely non-conscious. But your brain does a lot of other stuff too. It affects your eating behavior in a lot of ways.

Dr. Stephan Guyenet:

I think your brain can play some pretty big tricks on you, particularly when it comes to food intake, in terms of you not really being fully aware of how much you're eating. And again, it's not a matter of blame. It's not a matter of finger wagging, but it is just empirically true when you do the studies that people tend to eat more than they think they're eating when they're on weight loss diets. This has been shown over and over and over and over again. So, you don't need to blame yourself. You just need to understand that we have these fallible ancient cobbled together brains that have a bunch of stuff going on. Some of that stuff is not really doing what you want it to be doing. It's working against you. That's not your fault. It's just a fact.

Dr. John Berardi:

We're operating with brain systems that evolved for a different world.

Dr. Stephan Guyenet:

These are systems that evolved to promote survival and reproductive success a long time ago in a hunter gatherer environment. So, we have these brain systems that are optimized for a situation that we're no longer in. And so, you have a lot of stuff that's going on in your brain. I wish I had a brain that allowed me to focus without distraction for as long as I want to work in a day. That's not the brain I have. That's not the brain anybody has because that is not the kind of brain that promoted survival and reproduction in the time of our distant ancestors. It's just the thing I inherited this brain. That's not perfectly optimized for 2020, and it's not optimized for work productivity. It's not optimized for rationality. It's not optimized for kindness. It's not optimized for eating behavior and body fatness. There are all these things we're having to struggle against.

Dr. John Berardi:

Going back to my earlier advice, eat food, not too much in a satisfying mix of plants and animals. It appears that the second one is the biggest challenge because it's the one most beyond our conscious control.

Dr. Stephan Guyenet:

What I like to do is create a conceptual framework to help people think through some of those issues. And then talk about what issues flow from that conceptual framework in terms of practical actions. So, the conceptual framework is basically what we were just talking about, that we have this brain that does a lot of things that are beyond our conscious



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awareness. Like you don't choose how much appetite you have. You don't choose how seductive a food is to you. Those are just things that your brain generates and that you experience, but those things are not, again, our brains aren't just floating in a jar. Those are things that interact with our environment so they can be modified. So essentially you have two options that you could use. You could say, well, I don't really care about all this stuff. I'm just going to impose my iron will on my eating behavior.

Dr. Stephan Guyenet:

So even though I'm hungry, even though I'm really tempted by this delicious food, even though there's a pile of Hershey's Kisses right in front of me, I'm just going to have an iron will and I'm not going to respond to any of this and I'm going to reduce my calorie intake. And the truth is if you can pull it off, that works, but it's just really hard to pull off because that's not how the brain is set up to operate. It's not the natural way of interacting with food. The natural way for a human to interact with food is we eat when we feel like eating either we're hungry or it's the right time or we're tempted. And then we stop when we feel full. It's a very intuitive process and that's the natural, typical way of interacting with food for human. That's the way we've always been doing it for millions of years. And that is the way that these systems were set up to operate. And so, you can either fight all of that stuff. It's really powerful. It's going to fight back. It's not going to be easy and you'll probably fail.

Dr. John Berardi:

I'm hoping the second alternative has a more hopeful prognosis. So, what is it?

Dr. Stephan Guyenet:

You can change the signals that those systems are receiving, and you can try to recruit all of that stuff to your side and get it to stop opposing you and to help you in your, in your goals. So that's kind of the framework for me is like what signals, instead of trying to just stuff down all these impulses, all these brain systems that are giving us a hard time, how can we change the information we're feeding them and help recruit them to our own side. And so, there are a few ways that you can do that. And I cover more of these in my book, but I'll just touch on a couple of important ones.

Dr. Stephan Guyenet:

And one of the most important is to modify your food environment. So, your brain is constantly scanning your environment for things that it likes. And if it sees something like a soda on the counter, or a box of pizza and you can smell it and you can see it, and all those signals are going to your brain, we didn't talk about dopamine, but that gets your dopamine spiking. Suddenly you are going to have an urge to eat those things, and it's going to be strong. Maybe even if you were previously full, suddenly you feel hungry. You feel tempted when you see that box of pizza.

Dr. Stephan Guyenet:

And so, don't give your brain those stimulate. If you can have a clean food environment or a supportive food environment is the way I'd like to phrase it, where not constantly giving your brain, these visual and these scent cues that are triggering your dopamine spike and are creating these urges to consume. You're going to make things a lot easier for yourself. So, you're exerting a little bit of willpower now cleaning your food environment in order to not have to use willpower later. So, I think food environment is very, very important and that feeds into this reward system that regulates food seductiveness and our motivation or drive to eat.

Dr. John Berardi:

So that's Dr. Guyenet's first tip for not eating too much. Creating a food environment that's less likely to tempt you to eat when you prefer not to.



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Dr. Stephan Guyenet:

Another thing is to change how your brain perceives satiety fullness. So again, in this normal intuitive relationship we have with food, the amount of food that we eat at a sitting is determined by the amount it takes till we reached that fullness, right? That sensation of fullness. But what does that determine by? Well, it's determined by circuits in your brain that are receiving information from your digestive tract and then deciding whether you've had enough to generate that sensation. And so, it turns out that process can be manipulated. It's not inextricably linked to the number of calories that you eat. And so, if you choose certain types of foods over others, you can actually get that sensation that makes you intuitively want to stop your meal while having eaten fewer calories. And so, calorie density, in other words, the number of calories per gram or volume of food has a strong impact on that.

Dr. Stephan Guyenet:

So, more calorie dense foods are foods that have less water and less fiber, and those are less filling per calorie. So, this is counterintuitive to people because they think, well, when I eat cake or bacon or whatever, I feel really full, and that is true. But when you take account for the number of calories that you consumed, you're actually experiencing less fullness per calorie that you consumed. And so, if you eat something that's less calorie dense, like a bowl of oatmeal mostly water, an apple is mostly water, any kind of fresh meat or fish, egg, mostly water. So, when you consume those types of foods, you're going to experience more satiety or fullness per unit calorie. And you will push away from the table feeling just as satisfied, but having eaten fewer calories. And so, calorie density, protein, the more protein you eat in a meal the more satiety per calorie you experience, higher fiber more satiety.

Dr. John Berardi:

And that's Dr. Guyenet's second tip for not eating too much, including more foods that produce a higher level of satiety.

Dr. Stephan Guyenet:

And the last one is palatability or pleasure of eating. So basically, the better your food tastes, the more calories it takes for you to feel full. So, food tastes really good. That's basically your brain implicitly valuing the things that, that food contains your brain kind of cuts loose and turns off the brakes and lets you eat more of that food before you feel full. And so, foods that tastes really, really good, things like cake or fries or that sort of thing, it will take more of that food for you to get to the point of feeling full. And so that doesn't mean you have to just eat food that tastes bad. I think the concept I like to use here is simple, satisfying foods.

Dr. Stephan Guyenet:

So, there are foods that we can eat that are not super seductive. They're not chocolate, they're not cake, they're not French fries, they're not bacon, but they still taste good to us and leave us feeling satisfied. Things like simple cut of meat that's been simply cooked or a piece of fresh fruit. Those types of foods are the kinds of foods that you can eat and feel satisfied without feeling overly tempted and going overboard.

Dr. John Berardi:

And that's his third tip for not eating too much, eating more of the foods you find satisfying and a bit less of the foods that you find too seductive.

Dr. Stephan Guyenet:

I don't want to give people the wrong impression. I may have given the impression that this is more complicated than it really is. If you look at the types of foods that have a higher satiety index, in other words, higher satiety per calorie, it's

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pretty much all simple unrefined foods. So, and all the ones that create little satiety per calorie are pretty much all refined palatable foods like processed.

Dr. John Berardi:

Mm-mm (negative). Have I heard this somewhere before?

Dr. Stephan Guyenet:

So, if you just want a rule of thumb on how to do this, just eat simple unprocessed foods and don't add a lot of fat to it. Don't add a lot of sugars or refined starches to it and you're going to be largely doing what I just described.

Dr. John Berardi:

Yeah, eating should probably never be viewed as a biological exercise. That's devoid of pleasure. I really like how Brian St. Pierre puts this into context.

Brian St. Pierre:

And so, when you ask what's my dietary philosophy and I'm at around a campfire, well, I would say it's emphasizing minimally processed whole foods, but finding that balance between the life you want to lead and let's say whatever the outcome you want to have, whether it's a fitness goal or an aesthetic goal, or just your health and longevity, anyway it's a combination of all of those things. How far do you want to push that relative to how you want to sit and have some beers around a fire pit? You want to have pizza with your kids. You want to do X, Y, and Z, right? How do we find the middle ground between those things? So, my dietary philosophy is helping people find the middle ground between those two ends, right? The life you want to lead, the outcomes you want to have. Okay. Where can we meet to find the intake that's going to help you do accomplish all of those things in a safe desirable way.

Dr. John Berardi:

Of course, you can always find people who view health as primarily a biochemical outcome. Dr. Paul Saladino who appeared in episodes one and two, seems to trend in this direction.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

I do not use food as entertainment. And I think that if humans want to have optimal health, you have to do your own quality of life equation. And if you choose to make food your highest quality of life, and you're a quote foodie, or you've used food as entertainment, you must also admit and accept that you will not optimize your health in every way, shape and form. And that is fine. That is your own reality. And that is equally valid to mine. But personally, because of the work that I do and what I am most passionate about, food is not entertainment. This is not to say that I don't need a lot of food that I really enjoy, but I don't use food as entertainment. And I think that that is a goal, that is an ideal that will really stymie and get in the way of optimal health as a human.

Dr. John Berardi:

Yeah, as Brian St. Pierre reminds us.

Brian St. Pierre:

One of the things that occurs to me when people talk about health is they don't always have a great definition of what is health? Like what does that even mean to you? Right. For a lot of people, it's just physical health. Oh, my blood work is better or I feel like I have more energy. It's usually a lot of these physical markers of their health, but there are many other facets or dimensions of health to consider. And I think if we can get people to think along those lines and see,

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okay, how my actions contribute or pull away from, or diminish these other dimensions of my health, they might think a little bit differently about their choices they're going to make.

Dr. John Berardi:

These other dimensions include.

Brian St. Pierre:

Your mental and emotional health, right? Like your environmental health, your spiritual or your existential health, right? Your social relational health.

Dr. John Berardi:

So, here's an example.

Brian St. Pierre:

If suddenly eating keto helps you lose weight and your physical health improves, but now you don't go out with your friends because they eat differently than you, right. It has a massive impact on your social relational health or your family or your children or whatever the case might be, right? Which then has impacts on your mental and emotional health, because now you don't have a social connection and an outlet. So, you have to consider, and maybe maybe it's the opposite. Maybe you find a tribe of people who eat this way. And now you've got a new community that you're with, right? So, there can be benefits. That's where something like CrossFit was so successful it created comradery, right? It created this community. So, people were not only excited to go exercise and improve their physical health. It was contributing to their social relational health, which was then also contributing to their mental and emotional health.

Brian St. Pierre:

So, it's this full circle it's web, I think we have to keep in mind. It's incredibly important to also consider those other dimensions of health, because that's a big reason why people end up backsliding in their approach because whatever they chose to do only contributed to one aspect and maybe even drew away from other aspects. So, when you start thinking about your actions in that full web, you might make different decisions because they contribute to other areas that will then help you sustain whatever it is you're doing.

Dr. John Berardi:

If someone would study my work on nutrition, they'd likely call me a centrist. Where do I fall on the plants versus animals spectrum? Firmly in the middle. Half my diet is plants. So, fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans, and lentils, and the other half is animals, meat and organs. Where do I fall on the macronutrient spectrum? In the middle again, I probably get around one third of my calories from protein, one third from carbs and one third from fats. Now I do avoid certain foods because of allergies or intolerances, which I think is important for everyone, dairy in my case. I have lactose intolerance and a milk protein allergy. So, I just don't eat any dairy. I also avoid certain fruits and vegetables and they are just a few that upset my stomach and soy and wheat. I don't know what's going on there, but it seems to get an immune response that causes excess mucus production and congestion.

Dr. John Berardi:

So, I avoid those or minimize them, but here's the thing I don't recommend everyone else avoid these things because I personally don't tolerate them well. I think each person has to adjust their food selections to fit their own bodies. Which again, if you think about it from a theoretical point of view, seeing what's out there in the marketplace of ideas, this is moderate. So, a lot of people wonder how well I do sharing a meal with those who have more extreme views. To this

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end, Dr. Paul Saladino and I did a little thought experiment together. So, we imagine him coming up to Canada to stay with me and my family. And we tried to figure out whether our eating schedules and our food selections could be compatible. First, we talked about meals.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

Now I structure my meals like this. I have two meals, no snacks. They're about six hours apart.

Dr. John Berardi:

Now I do something very similar. I eat two meals a day, so we could eat both our meals together every day. Next, we talked about protein.

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.

Dr. John Berardi:

Me too. I'm a weightlifter and I'm closer to about 200 pounds. So, my protein intake would be a bit higher about two pounds a day. But so far we're eating together twice a day and we are having big helpings of protein.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

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 a fruit. So, it's a non-sweet fruit.

Dr. John Berardi:

So next to his protein, Dr. Saladino would be eating fruit or honey or squash.

Dr. Paul Saladino:

It doesn't happen every day, but it happens probably three to four days a week right now.

Dr. John Berardi:

For my part. I also eat squash next to my protein, three or four times a week. I love butternut squash, butter, cup squash, and spaghetti squash. So, I usually include them in the rotation. And if it's not squash for me, it's a big portion of cooked asparagus, sugar snap, peas, cauliflower, broccoli, parsnips, or cabbage. Those are some of my favorites. And next to that, I usually have a big bowl of salad. Really big with lettuce, coleslaw mix, carrots, avocado, olives, pickles, and homemade dressing, which is usually olive oil, vinegar, lemon juice, Italian seasoning, and sea salt.

Dr. John Berardi:

So, this is where we'd start to depart. Dr. Saladino would have animal protein plus squash and berries, where I may have animal protein plus squash and a big salad filled with vegetables that I tolerate and enjoy. We both be drinking water. And the only other difference is that on days where I have a big weight training session, I'll include a dessert after one of my meals. That dessert usually contains half pint of dairy-free ice cream, a handful of raw mixed nuts, some frozen berries or cherries or bananas, a couple squares of 99% chocolate, some raw almond or cashew butter and some sea salt. And that when I asked Dr. Saladino, if he'd share this dessert with me.

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Dr. Paul Saladino:

Nope.

Dr. John Berardi:

Which is fine. And ideology aside reasonable with a higher body size and likely a higher weekly exercise volume, I need the extra calories and he probably doesn't. So, if you were to fly on the wall at my house and Dr. Saladino was here, it's clear that we wouldn't have an irreconcilable time. We did all our meals together. We'd prepare them out on the grill together. I just need to spend a few extra minutes preparing my salad and my dessert. And just see you know, I have also shared meals with Dr. Katz. We've enjoyed fruits, veggies, nuts, seeds, beans, and lentils together. Of course, he added a helping of whole grains display. Whereas I added animal protein to mine.

Dr. John Berardi:

This is one of the reasons I enjoy eating a mixed diet. It's easier to meet my nutrition needs. That's for sure, it supports my health goals. And I can sit down and share a meal with almost anyone which is especially important at home. With our four young children there are six of us living together, and this way of eating allows us to honor each of our own food preferences while still sharing meals. But let's be clear. I'm not arguing that you should value the same things I do. What I'm arguing is that dietary debates, even though they parade around us health debates are often about personal values. And if you disagree with me, that's fine. I'll just ask if you ever approached me about it, especially on the internet to remember this advice from Brian St. Pierre.

Brian St. Pierre:

With the internet today, those conversations spill over into public domain in ways that aren't actually helpful because most people don't have the context or the training to have that kind of conversation. So, it always brings me back to, I always think of it. It's actually a slightly different version of the [inaudible 00:45:37]. Have you seen the movie Wonder? Yeah. So, there is Daveed Diggs who's in Hamilton he's famous for it, he plays the teacher and he has this quote where he talks about you have to choose between being kind or being right, like choose kind. And I have it a slightly different version of this. If you have to choose between being right or being helpful, choose helpful. Being right and winning, but it doesn't actually help the person move forward or make better decisions, what did you actually accomplish?

Brian St. Pierre:

So yeah, we got to the truth and no one was any better for it. So let's say you're a coach and you're talking to a client winning an argument about why keto doesn't work and the insulin isn't, the evil entity has been described to be, if they were really interested in this and they're finding it working for them now, you're not only maybe discouraging them from doing what's working for them, or they're going to double down on it because they're like, "Man, this asclown doesn't know what he's talking about. This is working for me," now you're losing that social relational element there. And if they enjoy eating that way and it's contributing to that web of health, that deep health that I was talking about, it's causing increases and multiple dimensions, then it doesn't fundamentally matter so much exactly why it's working.

Brian St. Pierre:

Now, if they start making all kinds of poor or crazy decisions, based on that false premise, that's a different conversation. You're worried about their safety, but you still have to do it, have that conversation gently. And with the goal of helping them versus winning. So, to me, you have to choose between being right and being helpful and working with everyday people. I choose helpful

Dr. John Berardi:



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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. These interviews really are treasure troves of information and to access them as well as the 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.

