15 Foods That Love Your Heart Back Transcript

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Introduction and Summit Invitation

Well hello everybody. Welcome to another. And this is really big headline interview for the Reversing Heart Disease Summit. Get out a pad of paper. Get out a pen. You're going to want to take notes.

We got the effervescent, knowledgeable and internationally known Ocean Robbins. Good day. Ocean. Good day, doctor Khan. Great to be with you. Oh, we get this opportunity.

I don't travel to, California quite as much as I used to. We've met, but we do it a little bit more by, zoom. You have your upcoming Food Revolution Network massive summit, and, you were very kind of either been interviewed by you or your amazing father, John Robbins, for a number of years running.

I feel like I win the Academy Award when I get that email that we'd like to put you on the Food Revolution Network. So, people, after this summit, over, go right over the Food Revolution Network and sign up for April 25th.

You don't want to miss it. One of the biggest and certainly the best of the year. Right? I think so. And, you know, I just feel so grateful for you and everyone else who is learning and putting what we learn into action, because you know, the power of our food choices to literally change the course of our destiny is incredible.

And it's so liberatory, you know, to learn and then to put learning into action. And that's what you've been doing for decades. I'm so grateful and I'm grateful to be in this work with you.

Thank you. Thank you. And, you know, it's becoming more and more a national conversation, which I think we all welcome. I think we all feel let's have that conversation.

Yeah. It's geared towards a healthy kids. But let's not leave the plant based revolution out of all this, because the best foods are plant based foods.

There's no question about it. But we got to take one step at a time. And, I'm excited that there is conversation, and in this and in other places. So you and your amazing organization, Food Revolution, network at Food Revolution that our, you know, you put out some of the best quality educational material when it's in my inbox.

I read it because I know I'm going to learn something. And you certainly talk appropriately about heart disease. I think it's really a rather interesting comment.

Why Heart Disease Is Rare in Some Cultures

And one of your articles, well, as you wouldn't want to open a cardiology practice in Okinawa, rural China or Central Africa. Why is it why wouldn't a cardiologist want to open a office in, Okinawa?

Well, because heart disease is so rare in Okinawa, despite the fact that people there live typically quite a bit longer than we do in the United States.

And this is a fascinating thing. You know, the conventional belief has been sure, rates of heart disease have been going up over the generations. But we've been living longer.

So we live long enough to get heart disease and die from it. But now we look at a place like Okinawa, where they outlive Americans by the traditional eight eight years or more.

And yet they're rarely suffering from heart disease at any stage of life. And so it just makes us realize, wow, what are they doing? Right? And what are we doing wrong in the industrialized world?

I've had the opportunity to travel around the world and work with leaders in over 65 countries over the course of my life, and as I've traveled the globe, I've seen that not everybody eats like we do in the United States, but more and more people are eating like we do in the United States.

And as the American diet style is being exported around the world, waistlines are expanding, hospitals are filling up, and people are getting sick and dying from diseases that used to be virtually unheard of, including in places like China, where cardiovascular disease was also exceedingly rare.

Just a couple generations ago. Unfortunately, they're catching up with us. And as the American diet style spreads, it isn't just causing heart disease, but also cancer and type two diabetes and Alzheimer's disease.

But of course, the good news is we can do something about it. We can actually add years to life and life to years by changing what's on our forks. Well, it turns out I practice cardiology in Detroit, which at times has been rated the number one, city and region for cardiovascular disease.

You include the sister city of Flint about an hour to the north. So I'm never without my phone ringing. But one day, I hope that we can bring some more Okinawa to Detroit and Okinawa to Santa Cruz and all over, because we need a break.

We need to empty the hospitals and the cath labs. Now, you know, almost everybody listening to this right now, watching this, will recognize that you've been a leader in many world improvement activities, but certainly the plant based movement.

But maybe not everybody still realizes that you're, the offspring of John Robbins. John Robbins was born to half of the famous Baskin Robbins ice cream family.

People are probably starting to say, oh, that ocean Robbins, that John Robbins. So heart disease is personal in your family? Certainly. Thank God that you.

And not in your father because of decades of healthy lifestyle. But tell us about your grandfather and your uncle. Just a short summary for those that aren't familiar.

Sure. So my grandpa founded an ice cream company called Baskin Robbins. And my dad, John Robbins, grew up with an ice cream cone shaped swimming pool in the backyard and 31 flavors of ice cream in the freezer, and he was groomed to one day join in running the family business.

Ocean Robbins' Family Story and Food Revolution

But when he was in his early 20s, he was offered that chance. And he said no. And he he walked away from a path that, you know, was practically paved with gold and with ice cream, too, as we jokingly put it in, our family follow his own rocky road.

And he ended up moving with my mom to a little island off the coast of Canada. They built a one room log cabin, practiced yoga and meditation for several hours a day, grew most of their own food, and named their kid ocean and, I think you may know, Joel, that they almost name me kale.

This was before kale was cool, like in the 70s, but, but we did eat a lot of kale and cabbage and carrots and other veggies from from the garden. When I got a little older, we moved to California.

My dad ended up writing a book about the food industry in which he taught growing up. It was called A diet for New America, and it became a runaway bestseller and inspired millions of people to look at food as a chance to make a difference for their health and for the planet.

And one of its readers or readers ended up being my Grandpa Irv. Now, my Grandpa Irv had lost his brother in law and business partner, Burt Baskin to heart disease.

When my dad's uncle Burt was in his 50s and, my grandpa was now on a similar path. He was practically on death's door, around the age of 70. His doctors told him he had serious heart disease, serious diabetes, serious weight issues, and he didn't.

If he didn't make some big changes, he would not be around for long. But then they gave him a copy of the book diet for a New America. And amazingly enough, my grandpa read the book and he followed its advice.

He ended up cutting way down on sugar and processed foods, cutting way down on meat, eating way more fruits and vegetables. He even gave up ice cream and he got results.

He was a very methodical man and he tracked everything, and he watched while his weight went down and his cholesterol levels went down and his A1, C levels went down, and he started exercising more and walking more.

His golf game improved seven strokes. He lived 19 more healthy years. He reversed his diabetes. He reversed his heart disease. And you know, I think that we've really seen in my family on a personal level, what happens when we follow the standard American diet?

We get the standard American diseases like my dad's uncle Bert, like my grandpa. You know, the founders have one of the most iconic companies in American history.

And we've also seen what can happen when we make a change. And my dad, had the opportunity to make a difference in his father's life. And my grandpa had incredible courage.

I mean, can you imagine how hard it would be for somebody who spent his life selling ice cream to change his diet and give up ice cream for his health?

But, you know, he wanted to live. And I often say, my grandpa, who was one stubborn cookie, you know, if he could make changes like that, maybe there's hope for the rest of us, too, because we've all got some bad habits.

We all do some things that maybe aren't in our own best interests, and yet we all know something better might be possible. And if you're watching right now thinking, oh my gosh, I can do something better, well, let my grandpa be an inspiration to you.

I think his courage to change and listen to his renegade son maybe speaks more to the power of the human spirit even than all of his business achievements.

Oh, and, the viewers may not remember that in my own personal journey, which began eating plant based, ten years before the publication of your father's book, diet for a New America.

When I did get my hands on that book in 1987, it really cemented my understanding I had not been taught in medical school and residency and cardiology fellowship.

You know, the the support that your father put for your own health, for the animals and for the planet. It was a big, big deal in my life. Somebody loaned me the book, and I still don't know who that angel Elijah was, but I appreciate it.

In 1987, and, it's worked well for me ever since. So, we're glad that your dad took the path. He took you took the path you took. But let's teach a little about heart disease.

And I'm not going to quiz you. I'm going to feed you, from one of the great articles you've written. And people are hungry for details, but 15 foods for Heart health.

And let's start with number one. Barry's just a couple comments why you think every diet should include, you know, red and blueberries. Oh my goodness. Berries are incredible.

I mean they are they are they're delicious. I grew up on an island in the middle of the woods in British Columbia, and I used to go berry foraging, getting just covered in the things every day.

A few thorns as well. But my gosh, berries are amazing. All of the berries, it turns out. Now, there was a meta analysis study published in 2016 which found that berry consumption contributed to lower LDL or bad cholesterol, lower blood pressure, and, lower body mass index.

Just having 1 or 2 daily portions of strawberries or raspberries or blueberries or black berries can reduce your cardiovascular disease risk. They are anti-inflammatory.

They are antioxidant. They are, also good for our brain health and they're good for our circulation. So how about it with the berries? And by the way, in case you're wondering, you don't have to have fresh berries or wild foraged berries.

Frozen berries are awesome, too, and they're a little more economical and accessible for a lot of us. So, you know, just having some berries in the freezer, popping them out when you can can be a really good thing for your heart.

And I'd say if you're looking in the freezer for that chocolate chip cookie and you see that bag of frozen blueberries, just pop a few in your mouth, they're just as sweet.

Much more nutritious. All right, number two, food for your heart.

Top Heart-Healthy Foods: Berries, Greens, Avocados, Nuts, Beans, Apples, and Tomatoes

Write this down. Leafy greens just wrap on that a little bit. Leafy greens. Well, we hear about it all the time that greens are good for us. And it is true.

We're talking about spinach and collards and kale beet greens and dandelion greens. Also, you know cabbage. You know, it doesn't get all the attention it deserves, I think.

But cabbage is probably the most affordable leafy green and it is a health superstar. And, these are good, sources of vitamin K, which helps to declassify blood vessels and protect the arteries.

There was one meta analysis which showed that people who consumed an abundance of leafy greens had a 16% decrease in heart disease risk, 16% just from that one food being added to their diet regularly that we're talking about.

That's one change could save more than 97,000 people in the United States alone every single year. So bring on the Greens and you can do this too. You can have leafy greens, steamed or boiled or stir fried or chopped up, raw or blended into smoothies.

So many ways to enjoy them. And here to fresh is great. Frozen works two whatever form works for you. Okay, number three these are foods for heart health.

A couple people will say, but I don't include that in my dad. But let's talk about avocados for a minute. Absolutely. So, you know, some people are on a very low fat diet and they think avocados aren't so good.

And you know that obviously consult with your own health care professional about your specific situation. But on the whole, avocados are associated with a lot of beneficial health outcomes.

One of the great things about avocados is their potassium levels. So one has avocado delivers 33% of the daily recommended allowance for potassium. They're also a rich source of fiber, which is great for our health.

And, avocados are also a good source of healthy monounsaturated fats, which have been shown to reduce LDL

cholesterol and overall cardiovascular disease risk.

And the nice thing about it is you're getting it as part of a whole food, with all the phytonutrients and all the wonderful antioxidants and all the fiber that comes with avocado.

So that's an advantage. You wouldn't get with, say, avocado oil, which is also high in mono unsaturated fats. But it doesn't give you the whole package.

So avocado can be great guacamole chopped up in a salad. So many good ways to enjoy it. All right. Nuts and seeds. We got to talk about that for the heart.

Yeah. And this is another one that is a little controversial. There was a time when some of the great leaders in the Whole Foods Plant-Based movement said, we should reduce our fat consumption, and nuts and seeds are high in fat.

But but as the research has been coming in, we're starting to realize that you can get even better health benefits if you include nuts and seeds in your diet.

By the way, I am including here peanuts in the conversation. Even though they're a legume, not a nut. Nutritionally, they're very similar to nuts and seeds, so let's include them too.

So nuts and seeds overall have been shown to lower LDL cholesterol levels to reduce risk of inflammation, to decrease body weight, which is surprising considering how high in calories they are and to reduce insulin resistance, and also to improve endothelial function.

Walnuts have been particularly studied for their positive effects on LDL. Cholesterol levels may be partly because they have a good amount of omega three fatty acids, as, by the way, too, hemp seeds and then flax and chia seeds are a rich source of healthy omega three fats, ala in specific, and that can be great for your heart and for bringing down inflammation in your body.

Just one daily serving of nuts has been shown to reduce risk of cardiovascular death. In one major study by 39%, so adding and an ounce or two of nuts and seeds per day could be a very good thing for your heart.

Thank you for that. So I'm going to skip one luscious one to, at the end is a zinger. But let's go right to the old ditty beans. Beans. Good for the heart.

Why would, the audience want to be sure they're getting a serving or two of beans every day? When researchers have visited the blue zones, the regions in the world where people live the longest and healthiest lives, traditionally of any humans in the world, they are they eat very different diets in the different blue zones of the world.

But but there is one food group that they all have in common in abundance, and that is legumes. And it turns out there's a reason for this. Beans are high in a whole range of vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

They also contain phytochemicals that reduce inflammation and oxidative stress, which can be caused by a build up, build up a plaque, and can can clog the arteries.

They are, amazing. And there's many different kinds. So you've got darker colored beans like azuki and black beans, which have the highest amounts that phytochemicals.

But you've also got all the legume family. Let's not leave out lentils and split peas, which are not beans, but they are legumes and they also have incredible benefit.

One serving of beans per day. According to a major study, can reduce your risk of heart attack by 38%. Wow. Thank you. That's powerful. Let's skip over to another, you know, ditty that people know, which is an apple a day keeps your bypass surgeon away.

It's the bad apples. Why should we reach? What kind of apples? And how often? Well, apples are a surprisingly one to a lot of people for heart health, but the data is is strong.

For one thing, they contain pectin, which is a soluble fiber that blocks cholesterol absorption in your gut. And like beans, they also have, polyphenols and other antioxidant ants that fight heart disease by lowering blood pressure and LDL cholesterol levels.

There was one study which found that apples could be almost as effective at preventing heart disease deaths as statins, which is remarkable. Apples are a beneficial addition to just about any heart healthy diet, and you can eat them ideally with the skin on, because the skin provides most of the fiber and a lot of the other beneficial nutrients, too.

So don't peel your apples if you want the heart health benefits. And I find sometimes, you know you can buy a bag full the kind of the smaller medium sized apple and mean you can get an apple that's a whole meal.

I kind of prefer just that flavor of and joy and nutrition that comes from a little bit smaller, obviously, also fewer calories. But I do not skip apples.

Let's talk about another. We're talking about a lot of red, foods. We can't skip tomatoes. Another red food. Why should people wanting to avoid or treat their heart disease include tomatoes? And what kind?

Well, so tomatoes are a rich source of lycopene, which is an antioxidant and a carotenoid that gives them their red color. And lycopene can lower inflammation in your body.

It can prevent oxidative stress, which contributes to heart disease. Now there's a lot of discussion about the best way to eat tomatoes. Raw tomatoes has been shown to increase HDL cholesterol levels, which is generally considered the good cholesterol in overweight women.

But cooking tomatoes actually maximizes their nutritional benefits and increases absorb ability of that precious lycopene that is so good for you that that they're rich in.

So, cooking, stewing is probably best putting them in stews and chilis and stir fries. But RA has benefits too, for boosting that HDL cholesterol. So basically it's all good.

Tomatoes are awesome. Now there's been some discussion about lectins and whether tomatoes are actually hazardous. One prominent doctor has made something of a career off of warning of the dangers, but there is not any real science to back it up.

When you look at actual studies of actual human beings eating tomatoes or not, you find that that tomato eaters tend to live longer and be healthier. Now that said, if you're only tomato sauce is ketchup on French fries, I'm not going to promise you everlasting health and vitality.

You want to get your tomatoes in healthy forms? No harm to the ketchup necessarily, although if it's loaded in sugar, that could be a problem. But what is it come with?

So make sure you're getting tomatoes as part of an overall overall healthy dietary pattern. Excellent. I'm going to, just zip through naming a couple.

I wanted to share two last ones that at least one of them, which I think will surprise. But we want to focus on garlic, according to your teaching. Tumeric a spice.

You get the whole root. You can sprinkle a fresh bottle of the ginger, delicious black pepper and then cinnamon. So I hope everybody wrote those down.

But let's go to coriander. Coriander I think also known as cilantro. Why would somebody wanted to design their

weekly menu. Want to be sure to include cilantro or coriander.

Well so coriander is the seed of the plant. Cilantro is typically thought of as the leafy green of it. So curry it is the same plants, but the coriander seed has been found to help lower cholesterol levels.

This has been documented in multiple studies. There was a study, done. One study found that it could lower not just cholesterol, but also triglyceride levels and boost HDL levels.

Other studies have shown that coriander and curry leaves or cilantro leaves, as well as curry leaves, could help prevent blood clots that could be caused by heart disease.

Isn't that amazing? And when you think about it, we mentioned three of the 15 that are very common culturally to be together. We mentioned tomatoes, avocados and cilantro leaves.

And of course, people are thinking about guacamole or, you know, guacamole and salsa dips. That's maybe the issue of, a healthy chip. Or you can always, dip into these things with a carrot slice or a celery stock.

But, I think people figured out, you know, centuries ago, these foods go together and promote health. And they became long standing members of still very popular diet choices.

Maybe the healthiest part of a tailgate might be that salsa and that guacamole. But, beware the chips. They may carry some, you know, fats and salt and processed nature you don't want to have.

Well, I just got a, and this great list that you've created a Food Revolution network or Food revolution.org with the one everybody will smile at. Why would you put a dark chocolate in that top 15 list of foods for heart health?

That's got to be, you know, too indulgent.

Spices, Cilantro, and Dark Chocolate for Heart Health

Well, obviously chocolate's going to be a little up there with saturated fat, so that is on the downside for it. But the truth is, most people are not eating chocolate in huge quantities by the pound.

So the amount of saturated fat is going to be somewhat minimal. And there are some real benefits from cacao or cocoa or chocolate, which are all various forms of this really nutrient nutritious superfood.

One study showed that high levels of dark chocolate consumption reduced cardiovascular disease by 37%, reduced type two diabetes by 31%, and reduced risk of stroke by 29%.

This is really kind of shocking if you think about it. It's partly because of the antioxidants that are so high in there, and there are some special compounds in chocolate that just seem to be really, really good for us, including for our moods and for our hearts.

So when it comes to your health, though, keep in mind that darker is better. So you want to look for varieties that contain at least 72% cocoa content.

Why is this? Because if it's not so dark, there are two other things that are typically added to chocolate bars that are not chocolate. These are sugar and dairy.

Neither of those is a boon to your heart health. So avoid the the, chocolates that are high in sugar and dairy. Aim for dark chocolates. And I also always encourage people to support, support a healthier world by by contributing with, to the organic movement and the Fairtrade movement, because there is a lot of exploitation and child labor in the chocolate industry, especially chocolate growing in the Ivory Coast and Ghana, West Africa, which is where about half the world's chocolate comes from.

Slavery is rampant there, including with children, so you want to go with Fairtrade certified and organic. None of that organic chocolate is growing over there, so you can steer clear of a lot of those problems with those designations.

Well, thank you for that. We want to be kind and our choices for our health, but we have to be kind in the way it was, manufactured and developed. And, you know, certainly, the audience will have no trouble finding 85% cacao, dark chocolate, dairy free and even 95%.

And you're, you know, you're exchanging sugar for a bit of a bitter taste. You still got the chocolate. And we've had a flurry of studies in the last year about either these dark chocolate approaches or just getting an organic dark cocoa powder and putting a little teaspoon in coffee, or, maybe making a cocktail latte with perhaps, organic soy milk and, brain benefits, heart benefits.

The science is actually expanded quite a bit on this topic. So fun stuff. So it doesn't sound like we have to suffer for being a whole food plant based, heart forward diets.

Do we? We don't. And here's the other thing that I think is fascinating, Joel, is that our taste buds are directly linked to cardiovascular health. When you have good circulation to your body and affects every organ in your body, and you can have more pleasure and more vitality with healthy diet, typically as we age, our taste buds deteriorate.

So a lot of older people think, oh, food tasted better when I was a kid. Well, maybe the food was different, but also maybe our ability to taste has changed.

And if your taste buds go down in sensitivity, you're more prone to want more salt and sugar and oils and additives to get that sensation back. But the cool thing is that when you eat more whole, simple, healthy plant foods, you can increase circulation.

Your taste buds may restore you may find them becoming more sensitive. And here's the other thing. There's so much more pleasure in a life that is filled with vitality.

And when you have the energy and the mental clarity to do what you love, there's not a lot of pleasure to be found in a life where you live to eat. And the reality is that for a lot of people, when they make food the only source of entertainment or pleasure or the primary one in their lives, their their world gets smaller and smaller and smaller.

Food, Vitality, and Closing Remarks

So I want to help you have the pleasure and the joy and the vitality of a clear mind and energy to do what you love, to dance and play and run and sing and do what you were born to do, and fulfill your purpose and your contribution in this life.

And when you eat food that truly nourishes your well-being on every level, you get all that. And then food is not just entertainment, it's also nourishment to really uphold your life purpose.

Wow. Powerful, wonderful, and, very much needed words. I wouldn't want to end a conversation with you without surely mentioning that you're an author of several books, and the one that might be most healing and helpful to the audience at this summit is a book, called 31 Day Food Revolution Heal Your Body, Feel Great, and Transform the World.

I know Doctor Joel Furman, our friend, wrote the forward to that and just 31 days to make amazing, powerful improvements in your health. So I encourage people to pick up.

It is a paperback. It's quite well priced. 31 day food revolution. Next month you'll be able to tune in to a 2025 edition of the Food Revolution Network Summit.

So you always provide so much support to all of us in the plant based medical world. I want to thank you for that.

Thank you your wife and your kids and your father and all for all that they do for this.

And, appreciate your time today. Of course. So good to be with you, Joe. As always, I've had the privilege of interviewing you many times. And Doctor Furman as well, and to get to have the show on the other foot, so to speak, is a delight.

I just love that we get to do this together. And for everybody watching. Thank you for being a part of this revolutionary movement. Well said.