30 Plants a Week for a More Diverse Gut Transcript

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Summit Introduction and Gut Health Overview

Welcome everyone to the Gut Health and Longevity Summit. I am so glad you're here, and I want you to take a breath right now, because what you're about to hear over these sessions could change the way you think about your health, your food, and your future.

We built this summit because the science connecting your gut to every system in the body has never been more compelling, and most people have never heard it explained in plain language.

Our experts are here to change that. Today's conversation is one that I've genuinely been looking forward to. What it actually takes to build a gut that supports your energy, your mood, your immunity, and your longevity.

Starting with what is on your plate today, we're going to talk about how to feed your microbiome, the 40 trillion micro allies living in your body right now.

And my guest has spent decades helping people understand that every single meal is a choice about who you are feeding. And he's going to show you exactly what the good guys need to do to thrive.

My next guest grew up, knew that food could either heal the world or harm it because his own family lived both sides of the story. His grandfather co-founded the Baskin-Robbins ice cream empire that we all know about.

His father walked away from inheriting it and wrote diet for a New America, and became one of the world's leading voices for a healthy, plant based living lifestyle.

And ocean has spent his entire career carrying that revolution forward. At a scale his father could not have imagined. So Ocean Robbins co-founded the Food Revolution Network and now a million member global community, and serves as its CEO.

He founded yes, a nonprofit youth environmental organization at just 16 years old and has been building movements ever since. He is a TEDx speaker whose talk, Eating Your Way to Happiness has reached over a million viewers.

He is also the author of the 31 Day Food Revolution Real Superfoods and Powered by Plants.

Ocean Robbinsu2019 Family Story and Food Values

I am so excited to welcome you, ocean to really have this conversation and for our audience just to see a little bit more from you, because I know you already have a very big presence and I know you from the past few years spending a little bit more time with you.

So I would love to start with my first question, which is your family story? It's one of the most compelling in the entire food movement. Your grandfather co-founded Raskin Robbins.

Your father walked away from this legacy, and now you really spent your life building this new revolution forward. What did growing up in that story teach you about what food actually does to the human body, and how does it shape everything you do now?

Oh, just that That's that. Well, it's so, so great to be with you for this critical conversation. And yeah, so my grandpa did start a rather successful ice cream company.

And my dad, John, grew up with 31 flavors in the freezer and in time. And I ice cream cone shaped swimming pool

in the backyard. And my grandpa really wanted that.

Yes yes, yes there was. And, you know, my grandpa wanted my dad to become a businessman, to embrace a world of wealth and commerce and maybe even one day be part of the family legacy.

But my dad made a really different choice, and he ended up deciding to walk away from a whole set of values that he'd been raised in, and moved with my mom to a little island off the coast of British Columbia, Canada, where they built a one room log cabin, and they grew most of their own food.

They practiced yoga and meditation for several hours a day, and they named their kid ocean, and they almost named Michael. By the way, this is way before kale was cool, but we did eat a lot of kale and cabbage and carrots and other veggies from the garden, and also wild berries and, you know, real food in our home.

Food wasn't a product. It was a relationship. It was a relationship with the earth, with our bodies, and also with our values. And so, you know, my dad went on to become a bestselling author.

He wrote diet for a New America, which came out of 1987, and the media called him the Rebel Without a Cone. You know, he had walked away from a certain path and wound up speaking for a relationship with food, not as a commodity, but more so as a community, as a web of relationships.

And growing up that way taught me that food is never just something you throw down the hatch. It's also not just entertainment, it's identity, it's relationship.

It's values made visible. And every meal is a choice about what kind of person you want to be and what kind of world you want to help create. So I carry all of that now. I carry the science.

I carry the story. I carry the courage to make food an expression of conscience and values. And I feel so grateful to be able to speak now and organize now, to help people reclaim our relationships with food.

Because, you know, every single day we cast a vote three times for the health we want and for the world we want. And a lot of people don't realize how powerful that vote is to shape your destiny.

But I want to wake people up so we can really be the change and bring congruency between our values and our choices and thrive. Yeah. Okay. I'm going to divert a little bit from our questions a little bit.

But just to expand on what you just said, can you like for the people who are listening right now and maybe haven't really thought about, okay, what does my meal, my next meal have to do with my values?

And they kind of haven't had that little circular thought of what I'm actually putting on my plate represents me as a human. Can you expand a little bit on that so they can understand that?

Sure. Well, obviously we all know that food affects our health, right? So if you value vitality and well-being, then you can invest in that with your food choices.

You know, when you choose broccoli over donuts, you know you're making a choice. That's that. Your future self is going to thank you for. And over time, those choices have profound impact.

They can literally make the difference between whether you spend your senior years in a nursing home, waiting for death or climbing mountains, you know, playing with your grandkids, doing the things you love.

So, you know, they say a person with their health has a thousand dreams. A person without it has only got one dream, which is to get it back. So I want to help you have a thousand dreams.

And food is one of the most powerful ways to do that. But food also is a web of relationships. It's not just a commodity, it's also a community. And every bite you take is shaping practices and policies around the globe.

So when you choose, for example, to eat food that's growing organically, yes, you're exposing your body to less pesticides and hopefully get any more nutrient rich food.

But you're also supporting a food system where farm workers are less likely to be poisoned on the job, where lands and ecosystems are less likely to be soaked in poisons, where our water and our air can be cleaner for future generations, you're supporting more healthy topsoil.

You're supporting a more healthy living earth, and that also matters, I think. So, you know, I believe that that when we look at our food choices and where they where our food comes from, we see that it has all kinds of ripples.

And it helps us as human beings to know that we're part of the solution. You know, you might feel like only a drop in the bucket or a drop in the ocean, but at least get your drop in the right bucket.

You know, at least at least do what you can. And I say do that because yes, it matters to the bucket. It matters to the planet. It matters to the farmers and the farm workers and the animals that are impacted by our choices.

But it also matters to your own sense of conscience and integrity. You know, there's a lot going on in the world right now that we can't control. A lot of chaos, a lot of violence.

And in that context, I think it becomes all the more important to do what we can. You know, hope isn't a spectator sport to me. It's a verb, not a noun. And I want to have hope.

I want to live with hope. And part of how I do that is by trying as best I can to to make my choices aligned with my conscience. And food is a really great place to do that.

Yeah, yeah. And you know, when there is that thought around, food is just, okay. I just eat food because I'm supposed to eat food. And that big disconnect with what food is healthy versus not.

And that food is only necessarily about health. So you take this to a whole nother level of, all right, what is it actually doing to our planet? What is it doing to the people who are producing the food?

It's so fascinating to me that there are some foods that when I'm talking to people, they don't even know where they come from.

Feeding the Gut Microbiome

Like they've never actually seen these foods unless it's, like, prepared in a sandwich for them. Like they don't know how they grow on trees or on plants if they grow in the ground, or if they grow up on the top of a tree.

And that's where I feel there's a big disconnect. And we need to bring that connection back into the world, because that is really where we're going to find that the food, our next meal can be so healing, like our planet was literally built for creating this health for us.

And what are we doing is the complete opposite of that by destroying it. So I want to come back to this, this framing that you do that you say that every time you eat, you're feeding somebody.

And what do you mean? Can you unpack that? What do you mean? We're feeding somebody? And how can we think about that? There's an old story, reportedly from Cherokee folklore, about an elder teaching his grandson about life.

And the story goes that he says a fight is going on inside me, a terrible fight between two wolves. One is evil anger, envy, greed and resentment. The other is good.

Joy, peace, love, compassion. And the same fight is going on inside you and inside every other person to. And the grandson thinks for a moment and asks his grandpa which wolf will wind?

And the elder says simply, the one you feed when it comes to your gut microbiome, the 40 trillion organisms that live inside your digestive tract right now, that story becomes quite literal, because every time you eat, you really are feeding somebody.

And the question is which one? And here's the science behind it. Say your guts. Home to an almost incomprehensible community of microbes, bacteria, fungi, other microorganisms.

And they're not passive passengers. They help you digest your food. They produce neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine and Gaba that govern your mood, your anxiety, your capacity for joy.

They regulate your immune system, your metabolism, your inflammation levels. They even influence which parts of your DNA get expressed. The state of this community has been connected to your risk for heart disease, cancer, type two diabetes, Alzheimer's, depression, ADHD, and even chronic fatigue.

These are not fringe findings, by the way, this is where the science is pointing consistently and clearly. Now, the so-called bad bacteria in your gut are microbes that thrive on sugar and unhealthy fats.

Every time you eat a highly processed food, you're kind of rolling out a feast for the organisms that drive inflammation, that damage your gut lining, and that produce conditions in which chronic disease can take hold.

The so-called good bacteria run almost entirely on fiber, specifically the prebiotic fiber found abundantly in whole plant foods, vegetables, fruits, legumes, and whole grains.

All whole plant foods contain fiber. There's no fiber found in any animal products, in bottled water, or in added sugars. Our Paleolithic ancestors, researchers think, in many parts of the world, got about 100g of fiber a day.

Today, less than 5% of Americans are reaching the recommended 25 to 30g, the average Americans getting about 15g a day. This means most of us are literally starving the good guys while we're lavishly feeding the bad ones, and then we're wondering why we feel foggy and inflamed and anxious and exhausted.

So what is this framing change? Well, quite a bit, because it means that eating is no longer a passive act. You're not just consuming calories, you're making a choice with every meal about what community you invest in.

You're a steward for an entire ecosystem, and that ecosystem, when it thrives, will return the favor in profound ways in your digestion and your mood and your immunity and your mental clarity and your long term protection against almost every major disease that we face today.

This is one of the most powerful levers we've got to change our health for the better. It starts with who we feed. It makes me think that something I always tell my patients is literally the next meal on your plate could change what's going on with your gut microbiome.

So let's talk a little bit more about this, Wolf. You kind of mentioned some of the things, but I want to reiterate it a little bit for some of the things that I know many people are doing and not really connecting it.

Right. So we're basically feeding the bad wolf. And it makes me think of little Red Riding Hood, right, with the wolf. And like, I think it's that one. Is it that one?

I think it is that one. Grandmas. Grandma. The wolf's pretending to be Grandma Heidi. Yeah, I think it's that one. So one of the things you mentioned was sugar.

And it is sugar is so prevalent now on our grocery store shelves, you know, and I was having this conversation with my mom this weekend, and she's like, just because it's does it mean that because it's in the grocery store or it's available online, that it's all been tested for us?

And I'm like, no, no, no, no, that does not mean that it's been tested for us to be like good at all necessarily,

because most of the food that we find in grocery stores, if you're not on the periphery of the aisle and you go to the center of the aisle, is, you know, sugary cereals, processed baked goods, all this kind of stuff, which in the long term, when people are continuously eating this, I see it as cellular damage.

You know, I see it's affecting the body. One of the conveniences of life, you know, is having fast food everywhere, or a coffee shop where you go in and you get these sugary drinks without realizing the amount of sugar you're getting in there.

So you've already mentioned that the wolf is a sugar, right? So would you say that we can safely put instead of like, Captain Crunch and the Kellogg's Tiger on all these cereal?

Like we can literally put wolves on all of these that are like messing up our microbiome. Just imagine the well, not a cute wolf like, but like it's got like, you know, your blood dripping in its teeth, you know?

Yeah, yeah. I mean, oh my God, I could I want to make stickers and just go in the grocery store and stick it on me. I mean, and that's the thing is that these things are tasty, no doubt about it.

And they're pleasant, and they even probably are releasing dopamine in your brain because there's an instant hit of pleasure that comes with that familiar taste and sensation and the blood sugar bounce you get from sugary foods.

But but in the long run, they're literally eating away at your soul. You know? They're destroying your capacity for vitality, for life or pleasure, for freedom, for mobility.

You know, chronic inflammation is undergirding most of the major chronic diseases of our times. And certain foods are pro-inflammatory, certain foods are anti-inflammatory, and all the ultra processed foods are profoundly pro-inflammatory.

Maybe not all of them. I'm sure there's something technically ultra processed that isn't, but as a class, that's what they do. And and so are animal products generally pro-inflammatory.

So eating a whole foods plant forward dietary pattern is one of the most powerful things you can do to drive down that chronic inflammation and stop feeding the wolves that are eating you alive and start nourishing your health. And, you know, sugar is kind of like exhibit A in the ultra processed food world.

And of course, we're talking about cane sugar and corn sirup, but we're also talking a lot about the, you know, the calorie free sugar substitutes, which for the most part, you know, there's no free lunch here.

Like, we like to think that, oh, we can get that sweet taste without any harm. And yes, some of them don't raise your blood sugar immediately, but a lot of them have microbiome negative impacts.

And they also are associated, ironically, with increased risk of obesity. Like literally someone who drinks a Diet Coke may have more risk of obesity than someone who drinks a regular Coke.

And we don't entirely understand the mechanisms. It may be because of microbiome disruption. It may be because the body expects that sugar feels fooled and then suddenly voraciously hungry.

So somebody who drinks a Diet Coke may be more likely to eat more food shortly thereafter. We don't entirely know, but the facts are the facts, and it seems that sugar replacements don't tend to be any great favor for ourselves either.

So of course, there's a spectrum. You know, dates are going to be healthier than, you know, added sugars or date powder, and you're going to find fruit is pretty healthy as a sweetening source.

You know, if you add some pineapple or banana, you know, that's not going to have the same effect as high

fructose corn sirup. And there may be some non nutritive sweeteners that are a bit better.

I don't think we have any overwhelming evidence against Al Yellows yet. Stevia seems to be better than aspartame. But in general you want to sweeten your food with food, not with additives.

I think that's a good point. Is sugar in real whole foods? Plant foods like fruits is not a bad thing. Sugar in all these artificial forms that are additives are.

And you may have seen it in a city, one of the places that I've seen, the artificial sugars, whether it's in diet sodas or other foods, is autoimmune disease.

Sugar, Ultra-Processed Foods, and Inflammation

I've seen the rise in autoimmunity with how much diet sodas people are consuming, and there is science behind that to show that the microbiome definitely gets disrupted with these types of artificial sweeteners.

So if you could give every person in our audience just one food to add this week to start feeding the good guys, what would it be and why? I mean, I'd go with vegetables and you could choose any vegetable just about that there is, as long as you're eating the whole thing.

So I'm not talking, you know, like make sure you're getting the skin, not just the inside. So, yeah, like white potatoes without the skin might not be so great, but any leafy vegetable, let's say like a green vegetable, kale, collards, cabbage, you know, are amazing.

Broccoli, arugula, even even romaine lettuce. But ideally, get something that you can steam so that you can have a bunch of it, you know, and just pile it on, like start eating more of it.

There was a study in the Chicago Health and Aging Project, did a long term study, and they ended up concluding that people who consumed elders, who consumed a serving of vegetables a day, cruciferous vegetables had 11 more years of healthy brain function.

11 years. That's from a serving a day. Now, if you have 2 or 3 servings, you're probably getting even more benefit compared to the people who didn't consume them.

So really, just pile on the greens, you know, go for the green, I say. And that's on brand for you. You love me. There's a subconscious reason for this green.

I want people just to see green. Yeah. So yeah, I mean I think green is great. And yeah, I was going to say yeah, green is good. Wasn't that Greed is Good was that terrible movie.

So, you know, I think that's the number one thing I would say. Now on top of that, beans are number two. If you can get legumes in your diet regularly, they are consistently associated with longevity.

And one thing the greens and legumes both have in common is they're really loaded up with fiber. So you're feeding those good guys in your in your gut.

And of course with the greens you're getting all the sulforaphane and the all of the wonderful phytonutrients that they're loaded up with. And vitamins and minerals and legumes also bring a great, great amount of minerals.

You know, legumes are literally seeds, you know, that you could plant them in the ground and they would sprout and grow into a plant. So there's incredible vitality and energy there.

And they're also loaded with protein, which greens are two, by the way, for as a percentage of their calories. You know, broccoli is actually a pretty high protein food.

Of course, they're mostly water, so you'd have to eat a lot. But the point is that if you load up on the greens and the legumes, you're going to get a good amount of protein relative to calories.

And that's also a benefit. Yeah, I would agree. The dark leafy greens. And also because when I'm working with patients, I'm seeing that that somehow really gets missed in the meals, just as a reminder.

And then from a nutrient perspective, when we're looking at vitamins and minerals and antioxidants and polyphenols and all this kind of stuff that I'm finding people are deficient in when I'm testing them, dark, leafy greens is like the go to.

It's a no brainer that it should be in like on your plate every single day, twice a day, three times a day. However many meals you eat somewhere on that plate, you have to figure out how to make it green.

And not just brown and white, but okay, so let's talk about your Ted talk Eating Your Way to Happiness. Okay, so that title is pretty bold. Most scientists wouldn't dare to say you can eat your way to happiness.

Maybe not when you gave it. Now maybe they're talking about it. So what is actually happening between the gut and brain? And why are you confident enough to say that food is one of the most powerful and underrated mental health tools we have?

Most of us grew up believing the brain was command central. It was the organ that ran the show and the gut was just plumbing. What we now know is that relationship is almost backwards in some critical ways.

So your gut bacteria produce serotonin, dopamine and Gaba, which are the same neurotransmitters that govern your mood, your anxiety levels, and your capacity for joy.

And a significant portion of these chemicals do not originate in your brain. They originate in your gut, in the community of trillions of organisms that you're feeding with every bite you take.

So when your microbiome is struggling, when the good bacteria are depleted and the bad ones are dominant, it doesn't just show up as bloating or indigestion, it shows up as brain fog, as a low grade anxiety you can't quite explain as a flatness, a diminished capacity for pleasure.

It can show up as depression, and the research connecting diet to mental health is now compelling. There was a landmark study in the British Journal of Psychiatry, which found that even moderate consumption of fast food and commercial baked goods doubles the risk of developing depression, not increases it a little bit, doubles it.

There's also a growing body of evidence linking a disrupted gut microbiome to increased risk of schizophrenia, ADHD, obsessive compulsive disorder, and chronic fatigue syndrome.

These are not marginal conditions. They can devastate lives. The inflammation pathway is the other piece of this that I find critical. So when bad bacteria, which are fed by sugar and unhealthy fats damage your gut lining, harmful substances can cross into the bloodstream and trigger an immune response.

Chronic inflammation often follows, and chronic inflammation is now understood to be a major driver of depression. So the same dietary patterns that wreck your digestion are through inflammation cascades, literally contributing to mental illness.

And here's what I think is so powerful. We're living to a mental health crisis of staggering proportions.

Best Foods for Gut Health

Rates of anxiety and depression keep climbing, and the almost universal response is pharmacological. More prescriptions, more medications, more management.

But almost nobody in mainstream mental health today is asking, what are people eating? What's living in their gut? Are we treating the symptom while ignoring one of the root causes?

And I want to be clear, I'm not saying foods the only mental health tool, or that people should abandon medications or therapy. Those things matter enormously for a lot of people and they can absolutely save lives.

What I'm saying is, the evidence now tells us that food belongs in the conversation on the center of the plate, so to speak. A thriving microbiome isn't just a digestive matter, it's a mental health matter, and we can't fully address one without the other.

So yes, eating your way to happiness is not just a metaphor. It's a direction the science is pointing in. And I also want to say there is more pleasure long term and more joy long term in eating food that makes you well, then eating food that makes you sick.

Food isn't just entertainment, it's also nourishment. And when we when we think about it from that perspective, we really have a stake in learning to fall in love with foods that love us back.

You know, being addicted to junk food may bring short term pleasure, right? And satisfaction. But in the long run, there is so much more pleasure and satisfaction, I guarantee you, in nourishing food that tells your body I love you, I cherish you, and I'm going to take care of you.

Yes. Two points to further on. So from that mental health perspective, I agree. I'm glad that food is now becoming part of the conversation. It's a very important part of the conversation.

For so long now, I've seen patients just be prescribed SSRI selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors and then see that they're not feeling better. And just as you mentioned, what is the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor do.

It is meant to keep serotonin circulating in the body which serotonin a majority of it like 90% of it is made in the gut. So if you are not making it in the first place, you could not possibly circulate more to make you feel good.

Which is why we often find people who start a medication. They don't feel good, they go back to their doctor, and the doctor just gives them a second one to layer on without understanding.

The key is the microbiome or the gut to and your diet and your nutrition as the next step to really change that. Now, I'm not asking you to be perfect.

I'm sure Ocean's not asking to be perfect, but you can even do an experiment on yourself. I do this very often. I test my own resilience to be like, all right, have I eaten enough plants that I can go eat something like this?

And if I tell you what I eat, you're going to laugh because it's like, not bad compared to the rest of the world. And what they're eating because it's still a plant based version of something, you know?

So I might like, you know, have some vegan pizza or something like that. Vegan gluten free pizza that's like, all right, let me see how I'm going to feel the next day.

Or we have this great bakery in town that does gluten free vegan cakes. Right? So like, instead of getting like, a cupcake, I might get like a whole cake.

That only happens once a year for my birthday. Now, I've learned to literally put 90% of it in the freezer because I don't need to eat the whole thing, right?

But if you think about it, how do you feel after eating this kind of more sugary? Even though it's like natural sugars, like in large quantities, as opposed to eating like, I know I notice a difference if I'm eating my roasted veggies, my Kenya, my salads like I am all good if I just do a little bit of that, like it takes me a day to recover.

And it's the microbiome that's taking time to recover, and you're experiencing it through fatigue and brain fog and all this. So people can experiment on themselves as much as they want.

But once they learn how good they can feel with real food, that's where it's a real game changer. So give yourself time. You know, I'm telling the audience, give yourself time to really feel that change.

And one of those ways is you talk about 30 different plant foods per week for a target microbiome, for microbiome diversity, a number that surprised a lot of people when it first came out in the gut British Gut project.

Why does this variety matter so much? And does a sprig of parsley actually count? Well, the British Gut Project is one of the largest citizen microbiome studies ever conducted.

They collected poop samples from tens of thousands of participants. They found that the single strongest dietary predictor of microbiome diversity wasn't whether somebody was vegan or paleo or organic or conventional, or low carb or high carb.

It was the number of different plain foods that they ate every week. And people who ate 30 or more different plant foods every week had dramatically more diverse microbiomes than people who ate ten or fewer.

That was the dividing line that kept showing up in the data and microbiome diversity matters a lot. Think of your gut microbiome like an ecosystem, like a rainforest.

A rainforest with thousands of different species is resilient. It can handle drought, fire, disease, and disruption because it's got so many different organisms performing overlapping functions and they kind of balance each other.

But a forest with only a handful of species is way more fragile. One threat can wipe out a critical function. The same is true in your gut. A rich, diverse microbial community is more adaptable.

It's more protective. It's better at regulating inflammation. It's more capable of producing the full range of neurotransmitters and short chain fatty acids.

And here's why a variety specifically drives this.

Gut-Brain Connection and Mental Health

So different bacteria have different dietary preferences, so to speak. So some thrive on the the fibers that are in leafy green. Some specialize in the polyphenols in berries.

Some might flourish in the presence of resistance starch that's coming from legumes and whole grains. Some love the specific prebiotic compounds in garlic and onions, so there's no single plant food that feeds all of them.

And you want to cultivate a diverse microbiome by providing diverse fuel sources, you're essentially creating habitat for different species. So the opposite of this is what most people in industrialized societies are doing.

Research suggests about three quarters of the world's food comes from just 12 plant species. If you look at the average American diet, a huge portion of calories is coming just from corn soyeon wheat, often in processed and refined forms that the good bacteria can barely use.

And then you've got all the animal products in our diets, which provide no fiber whatsoever. So we've traded the rich dietary diversity that shaped the human microbiome over hundreds of thousands of years for a narrow, impoverished range of plant inputs and a lot of animal products.

And the microbiome is suffering. So, yeah, 30 different plants per week sounds like a lot. But when you start counting, it opens up ways in ways that people wouldn't expect.

So for example, sprig of partially counts. And here's the spirit of science. Every different plant food brings a different set of fibers and polyphenols and phytonutrients and prebiotic compounds.

So parsley has got its own phytochemical fingerprint. Small amount contribute something that a handful of spinach doesn't. And then you get your vegetables, all your vegetables and your fruits and your whole grains and your legumes and your nuts and your seats and your herbs and spices, which count.

By the way, morning coffee counts, dark chocolate counts, a pinch of turmeric in your soup counts. The research really points out that it's not hard to get to 30 different plant foods in a week.

In fact, I know a lot of folks who get to it in a meal. You know? Seriously, you can do it. And when you start thinking about it that way, what I love about it is that it's a way of adding in so you don't have to worry about being afraid of food.

A lot of people have this food phobia today, right? You get fixated on all the harms and dangers and oh my gosh, this has got this wrong and this has got this wrong.

And they end up with like not eating enough calories, you know, because they're afraid of food. I want you to have love of food and pleasure and food, enjoying food and love foods that love you back.

So part of how you do that is by adding in. And that actually naturally crowds out the bad stuff. So more whole plant foods. Put fresh herbs on everything.

Add a tablespoon of flax seed, enjoy your veggies, add some more veggies on top of whatever else you're eating. 2 or 3 different kinds if you like. Just keep going and see if you can keep track.

See if you can get to 30 in a day, certainly in a week. And, Bon appetit. I'm one of those people who, if well prepared, I will do 30 in a meal. I like doing 30 plants in like a mason jar salad, you know, and getting all of those in there and actually really works really well.

30 in a week is like a no brainer like that to me. I think everybody should be able to do. And as you build up, you'll be able to do the daily meal style.

Now, what do you think is the easiest way to add 5 or 10 plant a week without overhauling everything? Oh my gosh. I mean, make friends with a good recipe is, I think, tip number one.

Like find a recipe for something you can enjoy and make it regularly. You know, sometimes you have to try a few times to find the recipe you like or that your family will enjoy.

And then, you know, rinse and repeat every time you make it, it gets a little bit faster and you learn a little more about ways to spiff it up in a way your family will enjoy.

You know, recipes that I have to make from an actual recipe book take a lot longer because, like, I have to. How much? Again, you know, don't I have to wash the teaspoon measure again because I didn't get it and I got it wet, you know, like there's just all those little tips, but once you get fluid, you can just throw stuff in.

You know, you get so much that I am because you build up that confidence. Yeah. And and also you, you naturally have all the ingredients on hand because you added them to your shopping list because you knew you liked them.

So these things just get easier and easier and you build that fluency. So that's the big thing is make friends with recipes that are loaded up with whole plant foods.

You know what, food Revolution Network. We've got over 1500 recipes and our membership community and hundreds on our website. There's lots of great recipes out there.

We have, I've written a couple powered by Plants and Real Superfoods are both cookbooks. But the key thing is just find some you can enjoy and then keep making them again and again.

Yeah, absolutely. I'm one of my guilty pleasure foods. Is tofu scramble nachos. All right. So I'll take an entire block of tofu and add so many herbs and spices in it and break it up.

And then I will do the baked tortilla chips or bake them myself. But then I'll add all these veggies on top. And by then you literally can have 30 different plant whole foods in one meal.

So that's a guilty pleasure. All right, let's go on to the next question I have for you. So the supplement industry has convinced millions of people that gut health comes from a capsule, specifically a probiotic pill, a greens powder, a $60 bottle of something.

And you said the probiotic industry might be a gigantic waste of money. I might be with you there, but I, I want to hear what you have to say, because there's a reason I did not formulate a probiotic, because I have my opinion on that.

But let's hear what you have to say. Okay. Well, what I have to say is that probiotics are not inherently bad. I mean, obviously we need good microbes in our gut.

And so in theory, taking a capsule or eating a fermented food that's going to deliver them seems like a good thing, right? The problem is that we focus too much on the capsule or the pill and not enough on the food, and we wind up taking a bunch of, you know, getting a bunch of bacteria into our body that may die.

They may die when they get our stomach acids, of course, but they also may die if they do happen to get lucky enough to survive the journey into, you know, into our bodies, they are going to starve to death if we don't feed them.

And there's probably plenty of microorganisms already there that reproduce like rapidly. You know, they could double in a matter of hours, so why not get the food in there that nourishes the good guys and then they'll proliferate.

So I would rather, if I had to choose between a prebiotic and a probiotic, I'd rather give you a prebiotic. In other words, fiber, because that's what's going to feed the good guys.

It doesn't have to be one or the other. The nice thing about fermented foods is that they actually give you three things that give you prebiotics, probiotics, and post bionics.

Post bionics are like the fruit of the tree. So the the tree is like the, the microbes. And then they're constantly creating fruits which are post bionics.

These are the short. These lead to the short chain fatty acids like butyrate that are so incredibly good for bringing down inflammation and nourishing your brain health and your whole bodies well-being.

So you want the post biotic in there.

Microbiome Diversity and the 30-Plant Goal

And the cool thing is, when you eat for men and foods, you're getting all three. Because obviously, like kimchi, for example, has got amazing cabbage, which is super healthy, by the way, and spices and peppers and, and then you've got microbes that have fermented that and then you got the post biotic they created and you're getting all three and you're creating living habitat on the way down.

Those microbes have actually got something to eat that we know works for them. Right. Because they've already proven it. So those are really cool steps, I think, for a lot of people.

And then, you know, there's nothing wrong with probiotic pills necessarily, but they can create an overgrowth of certain microbes that crowd out the diversity that you want, because you really want that microbial diversity of the good guys.

You're not just feeding. To refer back to our earlier metaphor, one wolf you're feeling feeding trillions of them and you want to feed the right ones.

So I, you know, again, fiber, fiber, fiber resistant starch too. And those feed the good guys. And then yes, absolutely from any foods can be lovely. Probiotic pills can be beneficial.

But I'm generally more a fan of the fermented foods than I am of the pills because you get the whole package there. Yeah I would okay, good. We're in agreement with this because I don't think enough people are eating probiotic rich foods.

And from my experience as a medical doctor, the testing that I've done, a lot of people have bacterial overgrowth. So now if you're adding more probiotics via supplementation into that, you're creating a microbiome overgrowth, which makes things even more challenging.

So don't blindly just go pick up a probiotic. There was a recent study that came out that tested individuals after they had taken a round of antibiotics, and what the difference was if they took a probiotic right after it versus not.

And the ones who focused on eating the real foods actually had better microbiome regrowth than the person, the individuals who ended up taking a probiotic supplement, which was really interesting.

So the question is, what is your favorite probiotic rich food? And I'll tell you mine. Oh my gosh, my favorite. Well, I've been the only one I've been really liking our local farmers market.

We can get these flavored sauerkraut. They're like sauerkraut, but they've got, like, lemon and ginger. Oh my gosh, I love the ginger in there for some reason, you know.

And ideal and other yummy things added. There's all these different flavors. Caraway I mean interesting things and and what I like to do, I treat it like a salt sauce.

So I'll put it on top of a meal that didn't have salts because I don't want to over salt, you know, and they're salty, but the flavor profile is exquisite.

It makes it just so delicious. And I love what it's doing for my health. And of course, I'm consuming it along with a fiber rich meal. Usually, you know, maybe with some grains and legumes and vegetables.

And so all of that is just, just really lovely. We've made our own sauerkraut, too, by the way. It's just, you know, it's some work, some labor to mash up that cabbage.

And I'm a big fan of that and I want to get back into it. But lately I've been buying this stuff because it's so delicious. He just reminded me I have a very large Scobey for I'm making kombucha in my kitchen pantry, and it was kind of like in the back of the pantry.

And one of my assistants was over the house and she was trying to, like, organize something, and she freaked out because she didn't know what a Scoby was. And you're a physician, do you have body parts in.

And I'm like, no, this is a Scoby. This is how they make kombucha that you drink. So you just you just reminded me of that because she she really thought it was like a placenta.

Yeah, yeah, it really freaked her out. But I will say, if I'm just not preparing it myself, my favorite would be kimchi. I love the spice. I love the cabbage, gives a lot of flavors.

And then recently I've gotten into our local farmers market. I found pickled okra and that am on okra fan. I know a lot of people don't like it, but this pickled okra, the flavor that they put in there, that was really good.

So all right we know our favorites now. So ocean you've reached over 2 million people through the Food Revolution Network. You hear from your community constantly.

Can you tell us about someone without breaking any privacy who's gut health transformation changed not only their body, but the way they showed up in the world?

Like how you were talking about as being like, you know, this connection between the food and the planet and where this was genuinely a turning point for this person?

Sure. Well, let's see, I guess I'll tell you about Emily. So she was 17 years old. She growing up on the modern industrialized diet, and she developed irritable bowel syndrome, migraines and early signs of arthritis.

And then for the next 20 years, until the age of 37, she lived with massive bloating, chronic pain and what she described as constant humiliation from urgent bathroom runs.

She'd been to doctors, she tried all kinds of medications. Nobody ever talked to her about food, and she'd kind of resigned herself to the idea that this was just how her life was going to go.

Then she joined one of our Food Revolution summits, and she made a decision to turn her kitchen upside down. She shifted to a hopefully plant powered diet.

She ate lots of fermented foods with kimchi and fermented vegetables and miso and homemade almond milk yogurts. She ate way more fiber, and she was finally feeding the good bacteria in her gut.

And she did all this while she was working full time and raising a two year old daughter, which I think is worth noting. It wasn't easy, but she said that every step seemed to give her more energy, which fueled her next step.

And then one day she looked back and realized what had happened in totality. The IBS was gone, the migraines had stopped, the arthritis symptoms had disappeared, she said.

She had her life back. Not just her gut that her whole life, her confidence, her presence and her ability, most importantly to her to show up for her daughter.

At five years old, her daughter decided her favorite food was broccoli, which I think is a pretty cool place to end the story.

Probiotics, Fermented Foods, and Real-Life Transformations

Emily got her life back and she became a better mom, and we all know how important that is. Yeah, it's amazing how once your eyes kind of open to end your body and you start feeling what real food feels like, how symptoms you never thought of could disappear.

Like, I know when I have conversations with my patients now and we look back a year earlier because I always write it down, I'm like, all right, we're at our 12 month mark.

Let's they're like, oh, I had that problem. They completely forget they had the problem because it's it's resolved now, right. So we forget what we're not experiencing.

But we I maybe had for a long time. So that is a great story. All right. Last question for you. So people have been listening to really the importance of food, how important it is for your gut microbiome, how important it is for the planet.

But this conversation on gut health can feel a little challenging for people who maybe can't afford organic produce or supplements. And I know beans and lentils are some of the most powerful microbiome foods on the Earth, and really don't cost that much.

They're also the cheapest. How do we make this conversation real for someone who is working with a tight food budget or living somewhere? Which, by the way, if you've ever driven through the middle of Kansas, that is a food desert, living somewhere where limited fresh food is accessible.

How can we make this real for them? Yeah, well, obviously you do the best you can with what you've got, right? And we don't have access to the same resources, the same opportunities, same menu, but within the menu that you've got, you want to make the best choices that you can.

And when it comes to the cost of food, there's this most myth. I will have to say that healthy food is expensive, and it can be, you know, Whole Foods can take your whole paycheck if you focus, especially on some of the really marked up expensive superfoods and also even ultra processed foods.

Honestly, and organic costs more than conventional, you know, no doubt about it. But eating real, wholesome, healthy food can save actually quite a bit of money if you think about it.

Legumes, beans, you know, lentils, split peas, even whole grains. You know, quinoa, which is one of the more expensive ones, or rice, which is one of the more economical ones.

These are not expensive foods. They're staples. I mean, beans are sometimes called the poor man's meat for a reason. This is peasant food. And if we base our die at around the, you know, a lot of our calories coming from sweet potatoes and legumes and whole grains and vegetables, even now, vegetables can get expensive.

No doubt you can also grow them. You may be able to get them from a farmer's market. You can also get frozen vegetables and fruits, which is quite a bit cheaper often than fresh.

And also you won't have waste because you just use what you want and need. And then you know, when you base your diet around these kinds of foods, you can actually save quite a bit of money.

And not to mention the costs you may prevent in health care ailments down the road, right? Because cancer is pretty expensive, you know, even cardiovascular disease, getting a stent put in can be incredibly costly.

So if you're able to prevent disease and have more vitality and energy, that's an incredible savings. But even short term, you can save buckets of money by basing your diet around the the staples, what I call the real superfoods, you know, which are super healthy and super affordable and super delicious when you know what to do with them.

So it's worth learning. And I think in reality, you know, people talk about the price of food, but really it's it's as much as anything the time. Right.

And when you're stressed out and overwhelmed in your life, gaining a new skill and healthy eating is a skill takes time and energy investment. And I think that's actually the biggest real holdup that a lot of people face.

And there I've got to say that some of the keys are retraining your taste buds to enjoy simpler foods can help so you don't have to spend. You know, hours in the kitchen to make a meal.

Because if you base your diet around wholesome foods, for example, we make great dressing, a salad dressing, and I don't just put it on salad, I put it on just about everything.

And if I have like some beans and quinoa and kale, which, by the way, we keep those like in the fridge at all times, cooked in quantity. So we can just mix and match and add things.

So we batch cook, mix those up, put in some sauce and a little like hot sauce, maybe some of that dressing in the hot sauce. And I've got like a lovely meal or put in some of that dressing in sauerkraut and one of the flavored sauerkraut, and I've got another flavor profile and I can mix it up with different legumes, different grains, different vegetables, different combinations.

Add in some carrots and get something a little sweeter. You do those kinds of things and you find that it actually is not expensive at all. And it's remarkably tasty and satisfying.

But it does take habit change. It takes learning how to shop from a list instead of impulse buying. It takes making friends with recipes you can like, and it's a whole system evolution. There's there's taste bud evolution.

There's habit evolution. There's buying choice evolution. And your microbiome is going to change two, by the way, which is also in time going to help you love the foods that love you back because your microbes will actually crave the good guys instead of craving the bad guys.

But it does take some time and some investment, and it is probably the most high ROI investment you will ever make in your entire life. Absolutely, ocean.

This has been genuinely moving. The idea that each of us have 40 trillion allies waiting to be fed, and that every meal carries a choice about whether we strengthen or starve them.

That is a message that I want every person in our audience to carry with them. Ocean. Where can people find you if they want to learn more? Find your books.

Learn more about the Food Revolution Network. Where is the best way to reach you? Go to Food Revolution.org and you can learn all about our work and find hundreds of articles on critical food and health topics, and lots of yummy recipes, and learn about our master classes and courses and summits and other fun resources.

We've also got a number of books out. You can find them, you know, wherever online books are sold. Real superfoods, which focuses on everyday ingredients to help you thrive, and Powered By Plants, which focuses on how you can get your critical nutrient needs met on a whole foods plant forward dietary pattern.

Really, you find us in your heart every time you choose real food over processed junk. Every time you say, hey, I'm going to love my body by nourishing it.

Well, today I'm cheering you on. Yeah, absolutely. So here's your key takeaway audience. Every time you eat, you're feeding somebody or in this case, the wolf, and you decide which wolf you're going to have.

So the question is, are you feeding the good wolf or the bad wolf?

Affordable Gut Health on a Budget

So thank you so much for tuning into this episode. Coming next. Don't go anywhere. We're going to have another great episode for you with our Gut Health and Longevity Summit.

So thank you so much, ocean. Thank you. Monisha. It's been great.