Can Food Really Reverse Disease? Science Says Yes! Transcript

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Introduction and Ocean Robbinsu2019 Background

Hi, everybody. And welcome to our plant based Cancer Solutions Summit. And very excited about the purpose and mission of this summit. And today, we're really excited to have with us a terrific person to contribute a terrific individual.

Ocean Robbins. One of my favorite people in the world. And ocean, of course, you know, is a father, a husband, a gardener, a dancer, a million view TEDx speaker, a bestselling author, co-founder and CEO of the Million member Food Revolution Network.

And he's been, you know, doing this for decades already. And his books include the 31 Day Food Revolution, Real Superfoods, and Powered by Plants. So he's been involved with himself and his research team is his dad.

And just in this field of of motivating people to take better care of themselves, to be more loving and caring to themselves into the world around them instead of and essentially to protect our planet.

So I'm excited to have with, have him with us today and just so we can discuss how to be the best version of ourselves and be most protected against disease and simultaneously protect others and the planet while we're doing that.

Right. Ocean, great to have you here. Great to be with you, Jill. Thanks so much for having me on. Right. All right. Start like, just start and get a little brief.

I guess background of your personal story. I know we all know it, you know, but we should give a little bit of review of that, and we'll get into the questions.

Sure. Absolutely. Well, you know, of course, a little family story here is that my grandpa, Irvin Robbins, founded an ice cream company called Baskin Robbins, or 31 flavors.

And my dad and John grew up with an ice cream cone shaped swimming pool and 31 flavors of ice cream in the freezer. He was groomed to one day join in running the family business, but when he was in his early 20s, he was offered that chance and he said no.

And he walked away from a path that was practically paved with gold and ice cream to, 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.

He walked away from the company and any access to the family wealth, and they built a one room log cabin in the middle of the woods, where they practiced yoga and meditation for several hours a day, grew most of their own food all organically in their garden, and named their kid ocean.

And, you know, they almost named Mikhail. But this was way before kale was cool. So we did eat a lot of kale, though, and other veggies from the garden.

And as I got a little older, my family moved back to California, and my dad wound up coming out with a book in 1987 called diet for a New America, which became this runaway international bestseller and inspired millions of people to look at food as a chance to make a difference for their health and for their planet.

And, the media called him the Rebel Without a clone, you know, because he'd walked away from Baskin Robbins and now he was promoting healthy eating. One of his readers ended up being my grandpa Irv, who had lost his brother in law, Burt Baskin, to heart disease.

When my dad's uncle Bert, my grandpa's brother in law and business partner, was just 54 years old, and now my grandpa in his late 60s was on death's door with serious heart issues, weight issues, and type two diabetes and his doctors gave him a copy of my dad's book and told him to read it if he wanted to survive.

My grandpa read it. He followed its advice.

Top Cancer-Fighting Foods

He wound up cutting way down on animal products anyway. More fresh fruits and vegetables. He gave up sugar. He even gave up ice cream and he got results.

He reversed his diabetes, reversed his heart disease, got to follow the medications because he didn't need them anymore. His golf game improved seven strokes and he lived 19 more healthy years.

So we really seen in our family what happens when we follow the standard American diet and how powerful making changes can be? And then I joined in 2012 and joining with my dad directly to launch Food Revolution Network.

And, we've now grown to more than a million members. And our mission is healthy, ethical, sustainable food for all. Yeah. You know, we have a really great. And, of course, I'm always, just a pleasure, grateful for the work of your father and you all these decades and the and the great voice and admiration I have for you guys.

It's just great, you know, really great. So. All right, so I think we've spoken a lot about, how to protect against cancer, but then we'll go and let's go into today a little bit how when you protect yourself against cancer and live longer with cancer, how that affects other people around you and the planet and your own personal happiness.

But before we do that, let's just review, just initially, some of the top picks for cancer fighting foods, just to reinforce the highlights of those most powerful foods to protect against cancer.

And then we'll jump into the broader picture. Absolutely. Well, some of the top cancer fighting superfoods are going to be mushrooms. I mean, these will not be surprises to you, but I, I just get so excited about mushrooms because, you know, there was one study which found that women who consumed the equivalent of about a mushroom a day had a 64% decrease in their risk of breast cancer.

Mushrooms have a whole range of anti-cancer compounds in them, and it seems that all the different mushrooms have benefits. So, you know, obviously different benefits and different ones.

But, you know, studies have shown that they can help, in relation to stomach cancer, colorectal cancer, breast cancer, prostate cancers. They have antiangiogenic effects and proliferative impacts.

And so frequent consumption of mushrooms is awesome. Of course, remember to cook them because there's compounds in there you don't want. They get destroyed by cooking.

Garlic is another great one. Researchers studied 41,000 Iowa women and tracked their consumption of 127 different foods over a five year period, and they found the one food that was most highly associated with a statistically significant decrease in colon cancer was garlic.

In fact, people with the highest amounts of garlic in their diet had a 50% lower risk of colon cancer than those who ate lowest amounts. Their studies have shown, that garlic is linked to lower rates of stomach cancer when compared to a placebo.

And, there are many different compounds in it that could be beneficial here, but but let's talk about berries, too. I know, I know, you love berries, so do I.

They're delicious. I was born in a one room log cabin in the woods on an island, and we foraged for berries like it was the highlight of every summer.

Blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, a lolli, berries, all kinds of these things. Yeah. Anyway, different, different types of berries. I don't even know if I named them correctly in my little childhood, but they were so fun.

Anyhow, it turns out you don't have to eat wild foraged berries, and you don't even have to eat fresh berries for them to have benefit. You can even eat frozen berries, which are a lot more economical for a lot of people.

And our research has shown that most berries contain ellagic acid, which can inhibit tumor growth. Researchers at the American Institute for Cancer Research found that ellagic acid can.

You two had a contained several different cancer fighting, impacts at once. It's an antioxidant. It helps the body deactivate specific carcinogens, and it helps to slow the production and reproduction of cancer cells.

So berries are awesome. Researchers have linked them to lower risk of skin cancer and cancers of the bladder and lung and breast and esophagus. And then, of course, there's turmeric, right?

I mean, our spices in general are just a superfood for a couple reasons. Spices, replace generally sugar and, artificial flavorings and added fat and salt for flavor.

Right. You get flavor and deliciousness and you salivate more without all these things that are bad for you. So they're replacing bad stuff with good stuff, right?

Because they're actually loaded with so many antioxidants and beneficial compounds. Turmeric, however, might just be the king of spices when it comes to its anti-cancer potentials, and it particularly has a polyphenol called curcumin in it that is potent in reducing cancer risk.

So, you know, that's a great one. How much do you need? Well, in India, folks are consuming an average of about a teaspoon a day. And they also have, by the way, dramatically lower rates of Alzheimer's disease, even after adjusting for life expectancy than we do in the United States.

Like way lower turmeric might be part of the reason. It also might be partly because about half the population is vegetarian. Cabbage and all the cruciferous vegetables like, which includes broccoli and brussel sprouts and arugula and cauliflower and kale and turnips and collards, can be incredibly potent in protecting against cancer.

Studies have linked increased consumption of cruciferous veggies with decrease in rates of breast cancer, lung cancer, colorectal cancer, and prostate cancers.

They they're loaded with glucosinolates and also an enzyme called my Rossini's, which when you combine these two together through blending or chopping or best of all, chewing, you break up the plant cells.

Then my Rossini's comes into contact with the glucosinolates, and that creates a chemical reaction that produces I cells, dieci units, and sulforaphane, which are potent in their anti-cancer properties.

Cruciferous veggies are also great sources of vitamin C, which is an antioxidant and supports your immune health. And they're also good sources of manganese and folate and potassium and dietary fiber and carotenoids like beta carotene, which promotes cell communication and helps control abnormal cells.

And then all the leafy, dark green vegetables like kale, collards, spinach, chard, lettuce, bok choy, mustard greens are incredibly potent cancer fighting foods.

They contain lutein and zeaxanthin, which are powerful antioxidants that block early cancer development. And so they've been found to be helpful in reduction in rates of breast cancer, skin cancers, stomach cancer, and also cancers of the mouth and the larynx and then legumes.

You know, the beans and also peas and lentils and peanuts are potent cancer fighters. They're packed with fiber. That's been linked in some studies to lower rates of breast cancer and colorectal and prostate cancer.

There was one study which showed that eating beans and lentils was linked with decreased risk of cancers of the entire digestive tract, including the mouth, the stomach, the colon, rectal cancers, as well as cancer of the kidney.

And legumes are a great source of phyto chemicals and other health promoting substances that can also help protect against cancer. And and what's more, beans are often used in replacement.

Again, you get a twofer when you get rid of a bad thing with a good thing. So but when you swap out beef and instead replace it with beans, you get a twofer because you're removing a probable carcinogen and replacing it with something that's powerful in helping to fight cancer.

And then, of course, there's red grapes, which contain a whole host of phytonutrients include anthocyanins and a whole range of other compounds, including resveratrol.

And a bunch of studies with resveratrol has been found to block development of skin, breast and leukemia cancers at all three stages of disease. And then there's walnuts.

I could keep going. It sounds like it is toxic. Let me let me just mention celery is incredible.

Nutrition, Cancer Prevention, and Treatment

So, yeah, walnuts and celery too. There's just so many great food and flax seeds and chia seeds. Yes. And on and on. All right, let me just let me just say one thing about what you're saying.

Yeah, yeah, we have these foods, a wide diversity of anti-cancer foods, and they're shown to have cancer protective effects in cell cultures studies. When you add these compounds to cancer cells, they can't grow and they can die.

And then we have animal studies and then we have human studies. More than a thousand human studies. And almost all of these cancer protective foods showing that people with these foods in populations have low risk of cancer and then low risk of developing cancer, like you mentioned, with mushrooms, berries, lentils.

Right. And then we have interventional studies on people who have cancer or pre-cancerous conditions who are given mushrooms or berry powders or green vegetables and show that those people with cancer and there are hundreds of studies, just like there are hundreds of different carotenoids and hundreds of different types of fibers and hundreds of different types of antioxidants in foods.

So we're saying here that the studies that show that people, once they have cancer, the same foods that have been shown to be work in cell cultures, work in animals, and work in preventing cancers in humans also is shown to prevent recurrence of cancer and extend lifespan in people who have cancer.

So it's the same. So we have so many layers of different studies with these same foods that the depths of scientific credence, the degree of which it's proven is, is, you could say, is irrefutable at the benefit for people who don't have cancer, who are worried about cancer, and even who have cancer, this is the primary way for people to extend their life and control their life expectancy and be healthy.

And I have to say, I'm working on and have put together, a list of how much for various cancers chemotherapy extends lifespan in general. The type of side effects you get for that and cost for that degree of lifespan extension.

And compare that to the studies on the on foods like onions and scallions and garlic and flaxseeds and green vegetables and sprouts. In other words, we're seeing here that, the that people tremendously underestimate.

And our population as a whole doesn't respect the power of nutrition, of nutritional excellence and the power of food. And so that we've got to bring this back into balance here.

You know. Oh, absolutely. And I mean, the the human cost and the economic cost for focusing so much of our

financial resources on treatment with without focusing on prevention are absolutely devastating.

Yeah. It's because crazy, because, you know, about 40% of our population, 39% of men, 37% of women are. So about one in, you know, more than 1 in 3 of us are going to be diagnosed with cancer in our lifetimes.

I according to the current, the current data. And and yet, you know, perhaps half three quarters of those cases could be prevented with diet, lifestyle and environmental factors.

I mean, we know that only 5 to 10% of cancer cases are purely genetic and cause and even some of those might be influenced by diet and lifestyle. And so the opportunity here to to look upstream an ounce of prevention is worth a ton of cure.

Yeah. And you know, and and of course, the benefit is that you don't just prevent cancer when you choose healthier lifestyle and diet, you feel better.

I mean, chemotherapy does not make anybody feel better. It may prolong life in some cases, but it doesn't make anybody feel good. But eating, you know, mushrooms and berries and, you know, bok choy, it's going to make people feel better, more alive and also lower their risk of cardiovascular disease and dementia and type two diabetes and help you lose excess weight and help you sleep better and have you help you have a better sex life and feel more fulfilled and alive in your body, and have a clear mind and perform better at work.

And all of these benefits are possible when you give your body the right fuel, right? It's really important. So I just wanted to clarify that and I'm going to obviously go over this more of that.

It's not that I'm saying or yours or anybody saying that chemotherapy should be thrown out the window completely. No, there are certain there are certain cases with aggressive cancers where chemotherapy is necessary, but its effects are are are overexaggerated.

And it's utilized for cancers where the effects are minimal or none and it's still utilized or exaggerated the benefits, while the more profound benefits of nutritional interventions are it completely ignored.

So so there's a difference. So it has to be. We're talking here about precision nutrition and precision utilization of conventional therapies when needed and not use them excessively when not needed, and especially as nutrition is ignored.

So it gives people tools, knowledge and empowers them to make better choices. They're going to make for better outcomes. Absolutely. And what we're seeing, too, is that when people are doing chemotherapy or radiation or surgeries or other conventional allopathic approaches, when they combine those with healthy diet and lifestyle choices, their chances of success and survival go up substantially.

Yeah, that's, you know, exactly. Because even when chemotherapy is employed for an aggressive young age cancer where it's necessary, you still have escape cells that could come back and haunt you 5 or 10 years later.

And you can have other secondary cancers that could arise from the chemotherapy given to help that initial aggressive cancer and when you don't. And so it's also been shown that the things we're talking about can prevent the occurrence of secondary cancer that are caused years down the road from the chemo that are caused by the chemotherapy.

So this is all critical information that people are just not aware of. Absolutely.

Food Choices, Integrity, and Personal Well-Being

Give me a little give me the broad picture now of how this how you feel that being such a hobbyist and enthusiast about excellent nutrition can aid to your personal peace, happiness, relationships, and help the well-being of our planet and future generations.

I know that's a huge question, but start wherever you want and go. I will it. To me, there's there's a word that I just love, which is integrity. You know?

You know, when your choices and your actions are aligned with your values, with who you are, with what you believe and with what you're committed to in your life, then your life has that congruency and a potency that makes you a stronger, happier, and more satisfied human being.

And you know, there are so many places in life where we make deadening deals and compromises and we do things that we're like, oh, I, I know I shouldn't do that, but I gotta survive.

And, you know, it feels like it's a compromise. But when it when it comes to food, you have the opportunity with every bite you take to take kind of a stand, if you will, for your health and for your world.

And when you make that choice, a conscious one, you are essentially saying to yourselves and to your body, I love you and I care about you. And you're also saying to your relationship with the world around you, I am.

I'm a stand for what I believe in. And there's something incredibly potent about that. And now when I talk about the world around you, what I mean is that that every bite you take doesn't just affect your health, it also affects farm workers and farming practices and environmental issues around the globe.

And what we're seeing today is that when we eat less pesticides, when we eat less toxins, when we eat less animal products, we contribute to a less poisonous, toxic and unsustainable world.

Sea animal products for for specific are highly inefficient. Whenever you cycle calories to livestock, you get it's kind of a protein factory in reverse, so it takes about 12 pounds of grain or soy to produce a single pound of feedlot beef.

In the United States today, 3 to 4 with chicken maybe a little higher with with pork. All of these are incredible inefficiencies. So and when you look at land use globally, you know, livestock production is responsible for about 82% of all agricultural land to produce.

You know, just, you know, less than 20% of the world's calories. And so, you know, the negative impact of that is that if the whole world just theoretically went vegan tomorrow, we'd instantly free up an area of land equivalent to the entirety of the United States, European Union, China, and Australia combined, that area would instantly be freed up so we could turn it back into forests or rewilding, or help save habitat for endangered species, sequester carbon out of the atmosphere instead of using it to create grazing land for livestock and land on which we're growing soy, corn and other staples, pummeling them with pesticides and then feeding them to livestock.

So the environmental impact of livestock production is massive for our water, our biodiversity, our forests, our climate. And when we eat lower on the food chain, we take a serious bite out of that impact and we help create a sustainable future for all generations.

And so it's kind of wonderful. I think that eating lower on the food chain can have all those effects, while also contributing to helping our bodies to fight cancer, fight heart disease, fight two type two diabetes, fight Alzheimer's and feel better.

And so what I'm excited about here is the opportunity to bring our lives into alignment with who we are. Mahatma Gandhi once said, my life is my message and I really believe that, you know, we all have ideals and visions and values for how we want the world to be.

And instead of saying they should do something or blaming politics, missions or, or, you know, the corrupt corporations or the media or whatever other big players that are out there, what does it mean to take power back into our own hands, to say, I'm going to do what I can?

You know, I can't do everything, but I'll do my part and I'll be on the right side of history. And if enough of us do

that, we truly can change food culture and change the prospects for the future of life on earth.

Yeah, that's really important, I think, because we're all so, like, even discouraged that the direction of our country is doing so much damage to the potential for future generations.

But but the fact that we can do change our own lives, be role models, and affect as many people as we can to is will will be the growing power we have to positively affect the world.

So that's something that I know. You know, the food revolution has been, you know, centered core in your core values that you've been promoting, which is really wonderful.

So what? So what go a little more depth into pesticides and organic versus more conventional farming and how critical that is, particularly for the audience we're talking about to talking to today.

Sure. Absolutely. Well, so pesticides are you know, they were developed. We think of them as if they kill pests. But the truth is, they were developed, many of them all the way back in World War two to kill people.

And then they've been adapted for agricultural use. They're biocides, they kill life, and they're not narrowly niched, you know? And so, you know, they may kill bugs, but they also impact bacteria and other microorganisms, and they may impact our digestive tracks, and they may impact our health as well.

Of course, the dose determines the poison, right? So we can handle just about any amount of molecules of certain things. But but then it's the quantity that that can be lethal.

So I'm not saying that if you eat, you know, a spear of, of, you know, asparagus that had them, you know, a molecule of pesticide on it, you're going to keel over and die.

Organic Food, Pesticides, and Environmental Impact

What I'm saying is that over time, these can bio accumulate in our tissues, in our bodies. And there's also pesticides and other toxins coming at us from plastics and from our environment and our air.

And all of that can add up. It's cumulative for sure. Absolutely. So you want to minimize your exposure. And so pesticides are sprayed on foods and they are sprayed on croplands.

And there's no doubt about it that some of them can be endocrine disruptors, can be carcinogenic, can have negative effects on certainly farmworkers, but also on consumers and so, you know, the reality is, is there a safe amount?

Well, it depends, right? It depends on your genetics, on your other lifestyle factors, on how readily your body is able to detoxify. You know, I always say, if you're choosing between a non-organic, you know, head of broccoli and an organic donut, you know, go for the broccoli, right?

Because at the end of the day, it's going to confer massive health benefits that probably outweigh any pesticide exposure. We have so many studies showing the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables.

Most of those studies were done with people who were eating fruits and vegetables that were not growing organically, and they still had tremendous benefit, including reduced risk of cancer.

But that said, do what you can to reduce your exposure and you'll probably reap greater benefits. And so, you know, there was one large study in France that found people who ate mostly organic food, had a 2,425% rather lower risk of developing cancer overall, including especially reductions in postmenopausal breast cancer and lymphomas.

Now, it could be that the people who ate organic foods were also eating less processed diets in general, or any

more natural products, so we don't know exactly for sure what the cause and effect here is.

But we can say that when you eat more organically grown foods, you're getting less pesticide exposure. And we can say that's probably a very good thing. So pesticides aren't even the right name because they're weed killers and their growth inhibitors and their plastics and their chemicals and their plants pollution.

But but of course, you know, I think that the more organic and the more regenerative and more carefully the food is grown, the richer the nutrient content of the food, the more complex nutrient diversity becomes.

And the soil is better. The food is better. I'm all about, you know, let's pick the best food we can put in our body and the best quality food grown, the best quality soils.

And then we have this aspect of people think that seafood is being the health food or the health or the healthiest animal product to choose. And like the baby being the Geiger counter for damage, when your mother drinks alcohol, you have the can have birth defects and mothers eating fish, you know, and pollution, plastics, chemicals and seafood more likely to have birth defects.

The Geiger counter for cellular damage and people vastly underestimating the potential risks of eating contaminated seafood. The close off the continental war in the continental waters of polluted waters, of the, you know, of the major continents, including, you know, shellfish, bivalves, sardines which have plastics in their digestive tract.

So another aspect is the huge chemical exposure we're getting for people. Think of eating healthy food like a sardine or a clam, and they're getting plastic in their body, you know.

Yeah, absolutely. And some of the, the, pesticides from our agricultural processes wind up in our oceans and then in our fish as well, you know, and when you choose to eat more organically grown food, by the way, you aren't just impacting your pesticide exposure, but you are impacting our collective pesticide exposure because of all the ways that those pesticides filter out.

You're helping create a safer environment for animals, for wildlife, and for humans, as well as fish. And, you're also creating a better outcome for farm workers because the people out there in those fields every day have massive exposure and in some cases, sky high cancer rates.

So you can help take a bite out of all that by eating more organically grown food. Now, that said, it costs more money. If you can't afford organic, don't let that stop you from eating wholesome, healthy foods.

One trick is if you're eating fruits or vegetables and they're not growing organically, and they don't have some kind of a shell that protects them like an avocado that you don't eat, then, you can soak them in a solution.

It's about a tablespoon of baking soda per gallon of water for about ten minutes, and that will get off 80 to 90% of pesticide residues. So that's a great way to help protect yourself.

Also. Yeah yeah that's good. It also reduces contamination of bacteria exposure. It's good to do that baking sort of thing. Yeah. You know what you're saying.

It reminds me of that was the movie called avatar where they that famous movie where they, the people on the planet were they were connected to the animals and, and the they had a connection with the world around them.

I think people underestimate that.

Closing Reflections on Health and Connection

Our own personal health and happiness is connected and dependent on the world. Others protecting a relationship with other people are consideration and compassion for them. Our ability to help other people be healthier as we

help ourselves be healthier.

And like you're saying, we're all we're all interrelated and by and us living the life we that betters ourselves were bettering other people on the planet at the same time, which further benefits us.

Yeah, further gives us our own feeling of contentment, passion, mission in life because we're connecting our own with our own well-being to the well-being of others around us.

That's absolutely true. Yeah, yeah. All right. Well, thank you so much for being part of this, summit and and for all your help in the past and the future.

And we'll talk again soon. And everybody, wishing you all great health and much happiness always. And thanks for being part of the summit. Thank you.