Eating The Rainbow: The Ultimate Heart-Healthy Diet Transcript

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Introduction and guest background

Hello, everybody. And welcome back to the Reversing Heart Disease Summit. I'm Doctor Rita morelos Garza, the co-host of the summit. And I am so super excited and stoked about the interview that we have going today.

And have you learn and get to know Jennifer Whitmire. She is, an herbalist, a culinary, culinary expert. She's taking culinary classes. She is an expert in autoimmune disease and inflammation, and she has her own farm and grows her own foods and sprouts and does all these amazing things with food.

She's also a graduate of the nutritional Endocrinology Practitioner program, and she really helps people on a day to day basis to practically use foods functionally in their lives.

So welcome, Jennifer. I'm so excited to be here with you today. Thank you so much. I'm excited to be here too. I am excited to talk about food and she's my go to person.

I am a foodie and she I got to learn stuff from her just about every day about food. And since this is all about reversing heart disease, a lot of times we're hearing generic information like eat a plant based diet, reduce your fats, etc., etc.

so let's talk some practical stuff. Let's talk some real foods and specific foods that people can easily and delicious incorporate into their diets. And that helps to protect the cardiovascular system.

So tell me about some of your favorites. Yes. So I love this topic because for me, on my own health journey, you know, hearing eat plant based or do this, I need to know how and so how to put it into practice. Yes.

So for me, one of the main things is greens eating your greens. But how do we eat our greens. And so there's green smoothies or green juices or just a simple soup or a salad.

You know, that's a wonderful way to get in your greens.

Greens and red foods for heart health

But not just one type of greens, a whole variety of different greens. And so when you go to the grocery store, or are there some greens there in the store that you haven't seen or you haven't used before and tasting all these different greens, they're are wonderful for the heart and bitter.

We don't like bitter foods so we can find those greens that have that bitter taste and get those in there. We don't like bitter. We've been trained, our taste buds have been hijacked by the food system and so is learning how to eat these bitter greens, which are wonderful for the liver and the heart.

And so one way I like to do that is by starting small. You know, maybe you don't like arugula, but you could put a little bit of a gala in with some other greens, especially in like a smoothie.

So easy to hide them or in a soup or something, some arugula with the other greens and gradually start adding those in. So but when I'm thinking about the hearts, the foods, I think are most beneficial are the red foods.

So think of the red heart. We're looking for those red foods. And a lot of those are nitric oxide producers which help to boost our blood flow throughout the body and help with blood pressure and things like that.

And so when I look at red foods, beets come to mind. But maybe you're worried about blood sugar and beets, can cause blood sugar issues with some people, which also can lead to heart conditions.

And so maybe we just use a little bit of beets are using beet powder, even, which isn't necessarily a whole food, but you can still get so many wonderful benefits from a beet powder or pomegranate powder or just using whole pomegranates, adding pomegranates, to different foods, or even tomatoes, tomatoes, sauces, all of these wonderful red.

I could go on forever with the red foods and. The red foods, right? There's a lot of them. So what is it about red foods? That's cardioprotective. Yes. Well, they have anthocyanins in them, which are wonderful for the brain and for the heart and help with, repairing DNA and blood flow as well.

And as we mentioned before, some of the nitric oxide producers in there as well, and full of vitamins and minerals, too. And, you know, you mentioned before I played with herbs and so when I'm thinking about the heart, I'm also looking at the way I can incorporate different red herbs into the diet as well.

And so you don't have to, you know, just drink tea or just drink, take some herbal capsules or something like that. It's it's wonderful to add them into teas, which I do love. Teas and they can taste really great.

But thinking about the different herbs that are red and how we can incorporate them into our foods, for me, and the first red food that's also an herb that comes to mind is cayenne pepper.

And so cayenne is wonderful for the heart. It's wonderful for blood pressure regulating blood pressure. But it can be spicy for people. And so, you know, just adding a little bit, but you can find is even if you just start with a little sprinkle of cayenne and gradually increase over time, then you, you get to where you can better tolerate, cayenne.

But your cayenne peppers, any of those red peppers are going to be, wonderful with lycopene and things like that. They're wonderful. For the heart. But even the herbals like hibiscus, I love hibiscus, which taste a lot like dried cranberries.

And so when you buy dried cranberries, quite often they have sugar added to them. But if you can get dried hibiscus, it doesn't have the added sugar. It still gives you that cranberry flavor.

And you can use it in those same recipes where you would be adding dried cranberries so you could chop it up. Or even this is beautiful little flower.

Let's say it's the flower, but it's not the flower. It's like the calyx of the flower. Anyway, the flower falls off. It looks like an okra flower. It doesn't look like the beautiful tropical flower.

When we're talking about hibiscus tea. But it's it's even like a gummy texture. A lot like a dried cranberry. And so you can chop it and put it on a salad or put it on a breakfast or something like that.

And so that's a great way to get the benefits from like a hibiscus or hawthorn berries. That's another wonderful red herb strengthens the heart. And it's it's a berry.

And so when we think about our berries we can use it the same way we would use berries. And so like I mentioned the cranberries put some on a salad. You can hydrate them.

Some people can find them fresh in their yard. But most of us do buy them dried. But you can, you know, soak them and plump them up and add them to different dishes as well.

And so that's another great way to add these herbs, where you're not having to worry about making teas or tinctures and worrying about dosages and things like that.

It's a food. And so we don't have to worry about that. Right. And that's the thing that's so exciting. You mentioned red foods, you mentioned green foods, and you mentioned arugula.

And I wanted to go back to that because you mentioned we we didn't talk about why a burger is so good for heart

health. Yeah.

Smoothies, adaptogens, and stress support

So when I think of a frugal, so maybe I don't know if we're on the same, wavelength here, but when I think of a Google, I think about the heart and bile flow and bitter, foods.

But they're also wonderful for boosting nitric oxide and and blood flow as well. And so that is when it's a cruciferous vegetable, too, which is wonderful for DNA and maintaining our blood vessels and things like that, lowering cholesterol even.

And so that's one that's easy. I know it's also one of those that people either love it or they hate it. And so. Right. That is when they. Get used to it though. They can.

But you can. Yes, yes, yes, yes, you can train your taste buds. And so I tell people this over and over again, don't just say I don't like it, try it again and again, right again.

So I used to teach kids, cooking classes and it was the same thing. You know, they have to taste it over and over. And sometimes it can take ten times, but you'll get to where you even crave it.

So a food that you didn't even like before, all of a sudden you really want this food. And then it has all these wonderful health benefits as well. And so it may be playing with it and finding new ways to use it.

It doesn't have to be in a regular salad. We could sauté it. We could start put it in soup or stew. We could put it in a smoothie like I mentioned before.

Or stir fry it and mix in your greens. And so I like to have multiple types of greens, which sometimes people think that sounds like too much, but it's really not, if, you know, if you buy three kinds of greens and just a handful and handful and a handful and throw it in something, that's an easy way to incorporate those different greens, and if frugal is not one of your favorites, then you start small and then gradually increase.

That arugula. Yeah yeah. And I love arugula because of its great benefits for the heart. And also a lot of people claim that they can eat oxalates, which is a common thing, although it's usually means there's something else going on.

And Oregon's extremely low in oxalates. But going back to the nitric oxide, that's one of the reasons that I focus on getting a lot. And I'll tell you some of the ways I get it, too.

But it it's nitric oxide and the nitric oxide content you like. You said it dilates the blood vessels, which helps with blood pressure, but it also the nitric oxide has an effect on the endothelial linings.

So it strengthens the lining of the blood vessels and repairs the linings of your blood vessels. So it's really important to to look at nitric oxide containing food.

So we talked about beets and you mentioned you can get beet powder. And sometimes for folks who do have blood sugar issues and the beets cause their sugar to go up, I asked them to get fermented beet powder because when it's fermented, the bugs that fermented not only give you good gut bacteria to help your microbiome, which helps the heart in turn, but it also helps with the sugar content because the bugs, you know, the microbes eat the sugar.

So those are a couple of ways that you can do it. And just putting some beet powder in a smoothie. And you've mentioned smoothies a few times. So tell us a little bit about the benefits of a smoothie for heart health and how you would go about making a smoothie.

Yes, yes. So smoothies can be really great, except that I like to eat a smoothie. And so I don't like to just stick a

straw in it and gulp it down. And I don't like to add a lot of fruit either because of the blood sugar, issues there.

So a lot of times, well, even if you have a heart disease or any is my background is autoimmune. But when we use something like a smoothie, we can get a lot more greens in there than we would if we were sitting down to eat a salad or something like that.

And so you're going to get a whole lot more greens, which helps with, lowering your blood sugar. And the way it's processed is going to help you absorb those nutrients better as well.

So if you have an issue with your health, we need to get those minerals in as best as we can. And with the heart we're looking at potassium, which is going to be wonderful in our greens.

And so I like to put lots of greens in a smoothie. I always start with a liquid on the bottom. It doesn't have to be a milk. You can start with water.

So put some water in there. If you want a plant based milk and you don't have any, put in a tablespoon of your favorite nut or seed butter. You could put in, you know, some or just the nuts put in a handful of walnuts high in omega three fatty acids, which are wonderful for the heart.

Other omega threes could be your, chia seeds are flax seeds, which I also like to put in smoothies. I like a nice thick smoothie because I like to eat it with a spoon, not with a straw.

And so I will do that. Sometimes I'll add some protein powder. And a lot of people like protein powder. It's not a whole food. You don't have to put protein powder in there, but I will flavor it with a little bit of beet powder or pomegranate powder.

That way I don't need any sweeteners either. So I have my greens, I have chia seeds, maybe a handful of walnuts, but mostly greens, and then a little bit of these powders that will flavor it for me.

And you can even throw in some of your herbs as well. When you're thinking about the heart. Something else I like to think about when I'm as far as herbs or superfoods go with the heart are adaptogens.

And so a lot of times I will look at those and add those to a smoothie or an elixir or something like that. When we're looking at the heart, I think adaptogens can be really, helpful.

For those who don't know what adaptogens are, give us a little, you know, 30s. Okay. So they're kind of like a tonic. They can help to calm the system, help to regulate the system.

They help you to adapt to stressors that are going on in your body that we can have stress going on in the body if we're fighting something. But it could be environmental, as well, if you're just stressed at work stress, you have a stressful schedule today, things like that.

It just helps you to respond better to what's going on or these adaptogens. And there's a whole bunch of different ones. But I think that sometimes those can be very helpful with the heart as well.

That sounds great. And it can be, anything that manages stress, because stress is one of the leading causes of heart disease, right? You have the underlying, you know, genetic predisposition.

Perhaps you've got stressors in your body, creates, a whole soup, basically of of enzymes and hormones that are, you know, kind of protecting you from danger and protecting you from danger is not really good for your heart because it raises your blood pressure and it elevates your heart rate.

Omega-3 foods and heart-friendly crackers

And, you know, it sends all the, you know, the emphasis to your extremities and less to your vital organs. So it's

really important to do things that manage stress.

And there's other speakers on on here that are going to be talking more about stress. But the point is here you can manage stress with food by keeping your stress levels down and your food low toxicity, which the foods we're talking about the plant based kingdom as organic as possible are going to do that for you. Yes.

Yeah yeah yeah. So that was what you do for a smoothie. And I wanted to say one of the things where the rugelach, I put handfuls, big handfuls of arugula in my smoothies.

But I discovered recently that I can use a ruler and making crackers. So I threw some omega threes. And we'll talk more about some omega three rich foods that you can do.

But I put some, flax seeds, and she has seeds in the blender with a whole bunch of arugula. And then I put in some herbs, and I don't remember off the top of my head which ones are annatto, which is a high in vitamin E, which is super important.

I put in some nettles in kelp, which are high in minerals, which are heart healthy and I that I put them all blended together and oh my gosh, it made this beautiful cracker.

And I just had that for lunch. So there's lots of ways that you can do it. I made the cracker in the dehydrator. If you don't use a dehydrator, have one.

You could put it in on a low temperature oven and just watch it carefully. Low temperature. Because omega threes are very delicate and, they're sensitive to the high heat and we don't want oxidative damage to the facts in them because that oxidative damaged, oxidative damaged, oils in them will cause oxidative damage to your artery linings.

Right, right, right. Defeats the purpose there. Right. Exactly, exactly. So then foods, green foods, high foods high in, nitric oxide. Let's explore a little further on the omega threes okay.

And I was thinking of root herbs too. But with the omega threes, I was thinking, you know, chia seeds, flax seeds, hemp seeds and walnuts, but then also spa olina and Chlorella.

They can also help with, omega threes as well, and just very anti-inflammatory, and wonderful for adding to things to give you a nice creamy texture. So if you want to make a plant based cheese or you want to have a thicker smoothie like I mentioned before or the crackers, I add them to crackers quite often as well.

And a lot of these omega threes are also high in vitamin E, which you mentioned, which are wonderful for heart health and endothelial lining. But they are very fragile as well.

And so these seeds I do keep mine in the freezer. And I'd like the chia seeds. I soak them to make like a chia gel, which I learned from you. And I use that quite often, but with flax seeds, they have such a hard shell that I do soak them, before I use them.

Or I will grind them before I use them too, because otherwise they're just going to pass right through there. And you're not getting those benefits, right?

Hemp seeds so easy to sprinkle in anything. Salad, smoothie and pudding crackers. And they're delicious. And making a creamy soup. You have a broccoli soup that you want to be like.

The cream based soups used to have. Blend in a half a cup of hemp seeds into that soup, and you're going to have a wonderful, creamy soup. And in addition to being high in omega three, is they're high in protein and a bunch of other minerals.

So, yes, you like bloating your body with plant based goodness. And these kinds of nutrients are denser. Any of

these nutrients you only find in these phytochemical rich, colorful foods.

So I want you to talk about you said about the roots, but I also want you to talk about eating the rainbow while we're talking about that. Oh, yes. Yes, yes. Okay.

So there's so much you can talk about. So first I want to talk about some of the root based herbs, which are wonderful for the heart and easy to add in the foods.

The first one is turmeric. So many people know tumeric as an anti-inflammatory and some people take it in capsule form is so easy to get it. It looks like little fingers, their orange fingers, and grate them into different things.

You can grate them into different foods. It gives you a beautiful yellow color, which we'll talk about. The colors.

Root herbs, black garlic, and fermented foods

And it does have a little bit of a bitter flavor, but I like I love curries and blended into different things. Make your, milk. I can't think of it. It's not turmeric milk. Golden milk.

Make golden milk with this, turmeric make turmeric tea, what have you. But then other ones I was thinking of is garlic. And so whenever I think of garlic, I think of black garlic, especially talking to you.

But garlic is so wonderful for the heart, and we can use it in so many different ways. When we cook it, we kind of get rid of some of those medicinal qualities.

And so it's better raw, but when it's raw is so spicy and so a lot of I love it, but not everybody does. But something that you can do is you can just cut it in half, kind of clove in half and rub that on something.

You know, if you have a raw pizza crust you just took out of the dehydrator, rub a cut garlic clove on there and now you have a garlic pizza crust. It's delicious.

Or one of your onion breads that just came out of a dehydrator. That's another great thing. Or grate it over your soup or your salad, you know, after it's finished cooking.

If you do have a cooked soup, just grate some garlic over the top as well, and then you'll get those wonderful benefits, without having to cook it and destroying it.

And then another one I was thinking of was Ginger. And so we can have ginger tea, but then we can put ginger in so many different foods and things. I just made one of your recipes that's on your blog.

That was, cookies made with, ginger, and I put cinnamon and, a little bit of turmeric in there too. And so, yeah, you can even make your own cookies. Not cookies with sugar, but cookies that you make with nuts and seeds and some of these heart friendly, herbs, because you don't have to to miss out.

You can make them all in a healthy way. Yeah, absolutely. Those are great. And the other one, I thought it. Oh, the black garlic. I wanted to say, you know, Doctor Khan talks all the time about the getting aged garlic in the studies.

Well you can get aged garlic in capsules, but you can also age it yourself. About 10 or 11, 12 days if you take a clove of garlic ahead of garlic and I put it in a machine, it's kind of like a rice cooker.

But there's instructions on the internet for how to do it yourself without. That just seemed too hard for me. So I went the easy way to buy the little machine, but makes this black garlic, which is no longer spicy like that.

And I can eat two whole heads of garlic in a day and it's grilled on it, right, love? Let's look into that. You can usually find it at, gourmet stores, probably health food stores.

You can buy it already done. It's it's expensive to buy it that way. And the way I eat it, I just bought the machine. So either way. But try it out because it's so good for your heart.

Yeah, it's kind of sweet. And so it's really great. And salad dressings. Yeah. Yeah yeah. It's also good to see like candy. Yes. Yes it is. It is really good.

And I was thinking well we'll talk about color. But with fermented foods I love to make like kraut or kimchi kimchi with purple cabbage or red cabbage.

And so then you have those anthos linens. But then it's also a fermented food which helps soothe your gut bugs, helps your DNA and helps with inflammation and in the heart as well.

And so that's kind of a triple whammy. Nice. So let's talk about the rainbow. Yes. And so I have two rules. My number one rule is read the ingredients.

And so that's beyond the rainbow. And the second one is to eat the rainbow. And so we want to get in all of the different colors. At least in the day, if we can get in all the different colors at every meal, that would be optimal.

But we have to start where you are. So if you don't normally eat different colors, then think about, you know, what colors do I eat today? And what? How could I add some more colors?

And so this is something that I taught my kids when they were little. It's something my grandma actually taught me, that my granddad learned in the Army in the 40s, which is crazy.

Yeah. So things have definitely changed since then. But but it's wonderful. But every different color offers a different nutrient for our body. And so a lot of it is minerals.

Sometimes it's medicinal. You know, if we think of like a gingko or the turmeric or, you know, those are beautiful colors, but the always colors are in our foods.

They're even in our greens. So our greens contained other colors as well. We just see the green just like in the fall when your leaves change to a different color.

They have those nutrients and so when we eat, we want as many different nutrients as we can get in our meals. We want all those different minerals and those phytochemicals, and sometimes they're even chemicals.

We haven't learned about. And so if we look at our meal and we look at different colors, number one, if it's got different colors, you want to eat it.

It looks so beautiful, like, oh, this plate is so beautiful. People tell me all the time is so beautiful. And I'm like, you know, it's just I just threw a bunch of different colors on the the plate, but it does.

It looks amazing and everybody wants to eat it. And so it's really great for kids because number one, they want to find those different colors. But it's great for our heart as well because then we're getting all the especially potassium that we mentioned before. And and the red colors as well.

We want to make sure we're getting the reds, but looking at our meal or looking at your day, if you don't already, all the different colors, see how you can find other colors. Add.

It's easy when you're at the grocery store, or a farmer's market to look and see.

Eating the rainbow and closing advice

And what colors do I not normally buy? Am I buying all of the different colors? And then thinking about once you do master all the colors in a meal or in a day, then look at a meal, you know, can I get all the colors in this meal?

Can I get all the colors in two meals and just gradually working your your way up that way. Yeah. And then gives you a variety awesome. To look at. And when we think about the average American standard American diet, heart disease is rampant. Right.

And what colors do we typically see on the plate is white, white, rice and brown because they're eating meats and other things like that. Or chocolate chocolate's actually got some good qualities.

And then, what other colors do they eat? Really? Brown and brown. White. But there's not a. Lot. Rice, potatoes, the white rice. So and even as a plant based eater, a lot of people move from eating a standard American diet to a plant based diet that just is a lot of grains.

So if you can just focus on getting all these greens and colorful vegetables at every meal, wow, wow. It's amazing. Yes. Any last parting words for our people so we can go out and play with your food and get all these nutrients in?

Yes. So make making sure that you're eating, more than the five a day that I learned. You know, growing up five is shocking. Five a day you will survive 10 to 12 a day talking about vitamin A, talking about vegetables.

That's going to be optimal for you. And so exploring different foods. When in doubt, roast it. That's what I tell people. If you have no idea what to do with the vegetable roasted.

In a pan and. Roast, it may not be the healthiest way to cook it, but it is going to be delicious and it'll be a great way to introduce you to it until you can find other ways, to use it.

But my my takeaway is, you know, find ways that you can add different colors to your plate. Look at your plate. Do I have red? Do I have something yellow?

Yellow is a little bit challenging and purple is a little challenging. And so do I have red. Do I have something yellow? Do I have yellow or just say for. Yeah.

So, yellow squash is an easy one. Yeah. So your winter vegetables, those are going to give you some yellows. Yeah. Right. Right. And then purple, it could be purple cabbage or purple onions or blueberry.

Oh. Radicchio. Yes. So many of the lettuces, even our spring mixes. We have those purples too, right? Yes. I recently found, purple Savoy cabbage or the beautiful, beautiful leaves that were.

I just couldn't help but buy them. Even though I was leaving town the next day that year, I had to use them quickly. But yeah. So color and color and color and lots and lots of color and all of those represent the phytonutrients, as Jennifer said, and all those processing things and all of these things that have been studied to be supportive of cardiovascular health and, and overall health and anything that helps reduce inflammation is going to help your heart.

So that's where the ginger and the tumeric and other herbs like that. So thank you. If you guys don't follow Jennifer on Facebook, go ahead and do it.

Because she posted pictures of her meal just about every day. And it's so inspiring. I get so inspired and I look, I go, oh, I better go eat a little bit more color today.

So I appreciate you being here and sharing with everybody here on the Hard Health Summit. And guys, take all the things you're learning here and use them, put them into action.

Information without implementation is useless. So get out there, put this stuff into action. We give you practical strategies, practical tools that you can go ahead and use right away.

So thank you and we'll see you next time.