Introduction to Clean Eating and Functional Medicine

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And if you've got an animal that is has vibrancy and life into them, that vibrancy and live translates into the quality of that meat. Whereas if that doesn't exist for that animal, because the living standards that they're in are suboptimal, then you're just not going to get the highest quality of food.

And if we really think, well, what do we consume food for in the first place for nutrition, right? It's to optimize our health. So why wouldn't we consume the best.

Right? Right. Absolutely. Hi and welcome to the Functional Edge podcast. I'm your host, Doctor Julia Ward, medical director and founder of Balanced Body Functional Medicine.

Today, we're honored to welcome Doctor Arland Hill to our show. In this episode, Doctor Hill will be sharing insights on clean eating and food and offering expert guidance to help you navigate your health journey with the latest advancements in functional medicine.

So stay tuned for an engaging conversation that promises to empower and inspire your path to wellness. Doctor Hill, welcome. And why don't you go ahead and give us a little information on yourself?

Yeah. For sure. Thank you, doctor Ward. I truly appreciate you having me on today. Yeah, guys like doctor Ward said, I'm Doctor Arland Hill. I currently own and operate Harvest Hill's ranch.

And you may be asking yourself why is the doctor on this podcast talking about our ranch? And it's a it's a pretty interesting story is how I came to this point.

I'll just quickly share my background. As a kid, it was in agriculture, but it was in the conventional agriculture world. So I, I inherently have a love and a passion for this stuff.

From Clinical Practice to Ranching

Just from growing up in it. But as I became a professional working in the clinics, the thing that really promoted the jump back into this environment was that I recognized that the recommendations I was making to patients for sources of food, for the quality of food that I was asking them to go out and to purchase and to consistently make their diet.

Well, that wasn't easy as that recommendation was. And they were finding that to be a pretty tough challenge. And I said, that's it. I'm drawing a line in the sand.

I'm going to become the resource for these individuals that want the quality of food that I'm recommending, and they want to take back control of their health.

That's awesome. That's really great. So you're able to combine your your passion for agriculture, rural living and providing great quality food for patients.

Absolutely. That's awesome. So you spent over 20 years in clinical practice. What was it that finally pushed you to step away from the clinic and start the ranch?

A little bit of it, I just stated, but I can actually be much more specific. There were actually there was actually an

event that took place that was was really the trigger moment for me.

And it was when I was already becoming suspicious of some of the things that I mentioned earlier and just patients not being able to find things. But I, my wife and I had a routine of every Saturday morning or Sunday morning and sometimes both.

We would get up and go to the farmer's market. And I you know, the longer you're in an environment like that and the more informed you become, you start to learn to be able to ask questions.

And I realized that some of the questions I had either weren't being answered, or I was informed enough to realize that two and two wasn't equaling for any more in these environments.

And so when I started doing that, I did my own investigative work and just said, these, these some of these individuals aren't being honest with what they're portraying themselves as, and that's not fair to the consumer.

That's not what the consumer expects. And there's there's got to be a different approach here. What was it you were looking into the food industry or.

Well, it was even more so. You know, like most individuals think when you say go to the farmer's market, they think everything at the farmer's market is wholesome and pure, and it's raised with the best intentions.

And, you know, and and truly listen, there are many, many producers out there that do have that mindset and that intention. But unfortunately, you know, the bad seed tends to spoil the whole batch.

And we started noticing that. And really what I did is I trace the trail on this and found out this some of the vendors were actually just purchasing from wholesale locations and bringing it to the farmer's market.

They weren't oh, they weren't actually producing these things on their own. And what made me start to really question that was I having a background in agriculture?

Why Farmers Market Labels Can Mislead

I knew what it was, and I knew the process of producing some of these foods. And I was just like, you know, week in, week out. Some of these foods are just way too perfect.

They're way too prevalent, like what you're saying you have as far as the production facilities or the plot of land to be able to raise this. Yeah, you're producing a whole lot more than what you should be able to produce, and so that's for a reason.

Users were going to like where H-e-b goes to get their produce, and they're coming to the farmer's market and portraying it as being organically grown, small farm kind of a thing.

And that's exactly what was happening. Okay. Now that's sort of deceptive. Very much so. Very deceptive. Okay. So what surprised you the most when you moved from advising patients to actually producing the food yourself?

The biggest surprise for for my wife and I, who's my my partner in this venture, if you will, was really the educational part and as meaning as a whole.

So I've when I was in the clinic, I had a very captive audience, and that person was coming to me for expert advice. And when I transitioned into the agricultural world, it was much different, because now I was actually unrecognizable, having a battle against the food industry and having to have that conversation and realizing that I've got an entire marketing world out there that's educating consumers in one direction.

But here I am on the other side, and I'm having to educate them with a different story and a different line of thought. And those two definitely don't merge with each other the majority of the time.

Yeah, yeah. And and so for families trying to make healthier choices, why are labels like organic or grass fed often misleading? I think what you have to recall on that is it's not the producer that is responsible for that label being on there.

There's a company behind that label, and that company has a marketing department, and that marketing department has done an excessive amount of research, and they continue to do an ongoing amount of research to understand what influences the buyer in their purchasing decision.

And that's when you recognize that and realize that those labels are just meant to influence an emotional response. And the more of those emotional responses that you can have.

For example, I always think about this as the checkboxes. The more emotional checkboxes they can get you to check from looking at that label, the greater the probability that you're going to buy that food.

But what we've come to recognize is that many of these labels, you have many of these buzzwords out there, some of the ones that you mentioned, the grass fed, the pasture raised, these have become very popular words.

But unfortunately, in the same timeframe as their popularity has increased, they they've also been diluted at the same rate. They don't have the same meaning behind them, and many of them are just they're just window dressing really on these labels if anything.

Yeah, yeah. So there's not like a standard or is there a standard definition for if somebody, if you see a label that says like pasture raised or grass fed, is there some standard that they have to keep to, or is this sort of.

That's a great question. And grass fed, I'll actually speak to that very specifically here because that's that's one that I've actually been delving even further into of recent.

And just to give listeners an idea of this term, the USDA let go of that term back in 2016. They they didn't want to oversee that term. And so that right there says that, okay, we're not the USDA, the main oversight organization in our country for agriculture has made a statement that they're not going to enforce how grass fed is utilized.

They're going to outsource that to someone else. And they'll they'll kind of sit back and look at it from the outside, but they're not going to be they're not going to be the authority organization.

It's actually going to state whether or not something is grass fed, okay. The bigger problem you run into here with this term is that grass fed. What that term was intended to mean is that that animal is grass fed from start to finish.

So when it's weaned off of its mother, it only has its natural forage in front of it for the remainder of its life. Yeah.

Grass-Fed Standards and Food Processing

Fortunately, that term now means that that animal is grass fed up and to the point that it goes into the finishing process and the finishing is really what makes the difference in the quality and the nutrition of the meat.

And so now you've got a term grass fed that's speaking to the earlier phases of that animals life, but not to the latter phase of that. Animals live so they can grass feed this, this, you know this.

They say baby cow up until it gets to be more of an adult. And then they can, you know, feed it full of grain and antibiotics and whatever else they want to plump up its muscles in its meat and okay, that's exactly right.

Yeah. They can literally take that animal and it, it raise it on pasture for, you know, this varies from, from operation and operation or breed to breed, but let's say anywhere from 18 to 30 months.

And then they can send that animal to a feedlot and finish it in the feedlot, which most of you know, most of your listeners and the folks that we serve at harvest those range, that's not what they're interested in.

They want it finished on grass, just like we do. Yeah, but they can still use that terminology of grass fed. Wow, wow. So what other things do most consumers not understand about how grocery store food actually gets to their shelves?

That's a big one, because when you look at the these operations, these are large multi sector vertically integrated. I mean all these key words from the business world.

They they they check all these boxes right. So it's truly a business. And what they're doing is just like any other manufacturing sector. You know the analogy I'll go back to is it's kind of funny I'm using this as an analogy, but McDonald's right.

The person who's working the the French fries or the person who's flipping the burgers, you keep that person doing that one job because that optimizes productivity.

And, you know, you see that in all facets of industry, all the way back to Henry Ford and all the things he did. But that same mindset is translated into food production, where you have the processing facility and they're doing one specific job at the processing facility, and then they send it to the next location where they're going to do the packaging, and then they send it to the freezer facility.

If it needs to stay in a freezer up for, commercial freezer facility for a period of time. So my point is that you have multiple stops that this meat is going through, as opposed to just the direct from producer to consumer.

Like it be. Yeah, yeah. So you talk a lot about transparency. What does that really look like on a ranch open door policy, you know, to be able to say, hey, I want to see your herd.

I want to look at what that herd is foraging on. What are they eating in the warm season when they have ample grass? And then what are they eating in the cool season when the grasses aren't growing as well?

It's being able to you know, one of the things I like to do to keep our transparency out front is I like to create content. You know, I always feel like, look, if I'm being out front, I'm if you have a voice, if you're trying to lead the way, then you're pretty proud of what you're doing.

Yeah. And if you're hanging back in the shadows, you don't want to answer questions. You don't want to talk to folks. That's a red flag to me. Right? And that's unfortunately when it comes to the food industry, that's how the food industry operates.

We always joke, you know, if you have concerns about a food product, you buy, like let's say you buy a package of chicken, well, you can take you back to the store you bought it from.

But as far as actually getting on the phone and talking to the folks at Tyson or Perdue or any of these and actually understanding, oh, forget that. That's never going to happen. Yeah, never going to happen. Right.

So there isn't that transparency, right? Right. Absolutely. So you've said that food quality should never be compromised. How does that play out in your day to day decisions on the ranch?

I'm trying to optimize the health of that animal and the nutritional intake of that animal as much as possible. And some of the ways that we go about doing that, for example, with our cattle herd, and this is really applicable to even our chicken flocks, is that those animals are constantly moving.

They're not staying in a stationary location. They're always moving from paddock to paddock every day.

Transparency, Ranch Practices, and Animal Health

That's one of the first things we do around here in the morning is move them to their next paddock. That day. Okay, so that's that's one thing and we optimize with their nutrition.

So for example, I keep an organic sea salt in front of these guys all the time. And a very like right now it's pretty warm this time of year in this late summer.

And so they're going through a lot of that salt. But as it gets cooler they'll taper off on their use of it. They won't need quite as much. But that optimizes that animal's immune system.

And what that means for the consumer is that you have access to a product that does not have any vaccines, it doesn't have antibiotics, it doesn't have exposure to any other chemicals it's living in.

As pristine an environment as I can possibly create for that animal. And maybe the icing on the cake, that's a terrible analogy. But maybe, maybe the exclamation point here is that we we operate in a way where the, for example, the chicken flocks integrate with the cattle herd.

And we do that because the, for example, the manure from one species is an optimal it optimizes the other species environment in some way. So for example, the chickens, when we take them across the pasture, the grass becomes so much more vibrant and and just productive.

It's so funny to me every time we turn the cows in behind them doing that, they will just eat that area down in first before they touch anything else.

Interesting. Yeah, that's really cool. What what's the biggest challenge you face fighting against the quantity over quality model of corporate agriculture?

Well, when you're in the the quantity model as essentially in that model, you're doing everything off of a price per pound mindset. And I think that is very much a disservice to the consumer because it prevents the consumer from being able to ask the question, well, what about the quality is and consumers are smart when it comes to this.

I mean, we've all inherently bitten into whether it's chicken or beef or some other product, you're like, that's just the mouthfeel on that wasn't right, right.

And so, you know, the quality's not there. If the characteristics of the meat, just in terms of your, your, your mouthfeel with it isn't there, then that translates to the nutrition is not optimal for that animal either.

And if you've got an animal that is has vibrancy and life into them, that vibrancy and live translates into the quality of that meat. Whereas if that doesn't exist for that animal, because the living standards that they're in are suboptimal, then you're just not going to get the highest quality of food.

And if we really think, well, what do we consume food for in the first place for nutrition, right? It's to optimize our health. So why wouldn't we consume the best.

Right? Right. Absolutely. And I'll just say on a more of a personal note, I've been up in different parts of rural Texas, and I've seen some of these cattle feedlots where the cattle are just packed in shoulder to shoulder, nose to tail.

And it's like you see the, the undulation of the, the hills, but there is completely covered by cows, like they can barely move and, you know, and there's a big meatpacking plant nearby.

It's kind of a dangerous place to work. But I suspect that those that type of meat. You're just not getting good quality nutrition from. You're really not.

And again, I did the transparency component is what resonates to in that scenario is like if you have a question about that product, who are you going to go ask me to go knock on the door.

They're not going to acknowledge you. They're not going to entertain your questions. Right. Whereas if you're dealing with someone locally, you can ask all the questions you want.

Yeah, yeah. So why does it matter so much not just for you, but the next generation? That food is raised differently. There is an emerging paradigm that is known as transgenerational nutrition.

And this is this is not something that I came up with. This is a pretty well-established concept in the literature now, and it applies to things even outside of nutrition.

But what it what it states is that if and I kind of have to work from the negative side of this first, but it's that if someone makes negative, let's say a younger individual makes negative choices like food choices that are harmful to their health.

And they're like, yeah, so would it's my health. So be it, right? Yeah. Well, let's say it's a female. When she gets pregnant, she's passing on some of that dysfunction through the genetics to that next generation and setting that next generation up for a suboptimal, suboptimal environment.

And now that can couple over into the next generation even beyond that. And the evidence on this shows that right now, to undo that takes about three generations.

And so what I'm suggesting is that if you start out and you create that optimal environment, you have the optimal food choices. You're, you know, keeping your health as high up to as high of a status as possible, that transgenerational downward slide actually goes the opposite direction.

You're becoming more in tune with your environment, and being able to function in an environment without succumbing to the elements of health that we too often see.

Wow, that's great. That's great. So for someone new to buying direct from a rancher, like, where should they start? Well, it is a different mindset when you're buying from a ranch, because many individuals are accustomed to just running down to the store and grabbing a package of meat and that is truly not ideal when it comes to buying from a ranch.

You you want to think in larger quantities, in larger quantities, doesn't mean it needs to be unreasonable quantities. You can start literally like from us.

If you just wanted to buy three chickens, like we'll say get three chickens, baby. Okay, it's more than just buying a chicken, right? Or just more than just buying a packaged chicken breast just is a comparative.

Meat Quality, Nutrition, and Transgenerational Health

So you can start from smaller sizes like that, but go all the way up to say for example, a quarter cow or a half cow, or if even someone wanted to do a whole cow.

So the idea is that you always have accessibility to quality food in your freezer, and there's a security element on this. And, you know, maybe five years ago or six years ago, nobody would have cared anything about this part of the conversation.

But after we saw the reality of what can happen in a pandemic situation where our shelves become bare, well, you don't have to worry about that because I have food in the freezer that I can provide for you.

Right? So it's a much easier process where you always have things in your freezer to work from. Yeah, absolutely. What's the real difference between a freezer full of grocery store meat and a freezer full of your beef and chicken?

Oh gosh, let me start with a chicken. I will say hands down, if you have never had truly pasture raised chicken when you eat, pasture raised chicken is going to knock your socks off.

It is a completely different culinary experience. It tastes different. It's moist, it's juicy. I mean, it's just a different bird all together. I'll give you some examples of some of the difference here too.

And this is looking at the same life span, the same grow out time, if you will, on these birds. Is that our birds? In this last batch that we ran, we were typically had a bird that would dress out a whole bird at around five and a half to some, even up to 7 pounds.

Right. And you go and you buy the birds at the grocery store, a whole bird. And that bird may be around 4 pounds, three and a half, 4 pounds. They're probably not going to make 5 pounds.

And you ask yourself, well, you've got two birds. They live the same amount of life. How does one waste so much more and such a healthier product? It's the environment that that bird was in.

It's the it's what it had access to around it. So I would say just really the eating experience with chicken is so much more robust and vibrant. Beef, beef the same thing.

And we do some really interesting things with beef. So for example, organ meats are a big topic right now. And we do a 8515 blend where we have it's 85% ground, 15% organ meat.

And for those individuals that are looking to get organ meat in their diet, you can do it through those ground, do that ground beef. And honestly, you never know that it's in there.

You don't know that you're eating that organ meat okay. But it's it. Two it feels more like I just say it feels more nutritious. And maybe someone says, well, what does that really mean?

It just feels more satiating when you eat it. Okay, that's so interesting. And and what advice do you give to families who want to eat better but feel overwhelmed by cost or convenience issues?

There's a couple of ways to look at this. And and, you know, you and I being in the health care space, I tend to start from that perspective, maybe because that's, you know what what our background is in.

I look at it as you're going to pay one way or the other, either you can pay for prevention or you can pay for treatment. And I think everyone would rather pay for prevention and enjoy the experience, right, of providing, if you will, right.

This is not the need just to take a a tablet or something or anything like you actually get to fully enjoy and stimulate your frontal lobes in your brain and have that dopamine response from eating this food.

Right? So why not take advantage of that? But I think the other thing is that also acknowledging the satiety part of what I just mentioned is that when you eat quality food, you're not eating calories, you're eating nutrient density, and it takes less nutrient density to reach the same outcomes.

Yeah, yeah. That makes total sense, because I think a lot of our processed foods is just nutrient depleted, but it's calorie heavy. And that's yeah, that's the problem.

And and I've often heard in functional medicine that you can either, you know, pay the farmer or pay the pharmacist. And I think we'd all much rather pay the farmer for good nutrition and prevention stuff.

So how has this shift allowed you to not only serve your patients, but also support the patients of other clinicians? This, to me has been the biggest thing that I I've just truly it's been a personal satisfaction for me because when I was in a practice in clinic and I was one on one with the patient, I could support them and I was able to help them.

And there's a great satisfaction in that. But now, because there's so little accessibility to the quality of food that we produce and listen, I'm not saying that I'm on an island by myself.

There's other fish nominal producers out there that do an incredible job, but the problem is that the connection between those individuals and the health care community is not as it's not as good as what it should be.

And so, just like with you and with other providers, to be able to pick up the phone or send an email and say, look, this is what we offer it. It's something that literally your entire patient base can benefit from.

Buying Direct from the Ranch

And we're behind it. We're going to keep focusing on this like this is our mission. That to me is so rewarding because I know that it becomes an exponential effect at that point, that there's so many more people that we can get quality food in their hands that would have never possibly had that experience or would have had a misguided experience otherwise.

Yeah, yeah. And so what do you hope the future of food production looks like if more families start making these choices? I hope that a lot of it becomes decentralized.

And right now we live in a a world where our food system is becoming more and more centralized. There's fewer and fewer entities that are controlling it.

And I think that certainly sets us up for some big concerns in a number of different ways. And it also breaks that connection to your food. I think more individuals would make better food choices if they truly felt connected to their food.

And the easiest way to do that is just to build a relationship with the producer. Allow them to have that conversation with you. Be able to shake their hand, look them in the eyes, and just have that human experience where when you look at someone and you have that interaction, all of us inherently know, yeah, this person's a solid individual.

They're telling me the truth. Or your B. S. meter goes up and is like, something's not right here, right? That's the kind of thing that if you're not going to produce it and grow it yourself, that's the kind of relationship you need to have.

And that's my goal for For Everyone would be that they can have that type of experience. That's great. Yeah. All right. So where can people go to learn more about your ranch and, connect with you directly?

You can go to Harvest Hills ranch.com. And on that you'll be able to get some information about the ranch. You'll be able to see what we offer when, for example, right now we're doing a pre-sale on our fall beef harvest.

And so you'll be able to access and get information about that. And then the other area that I would recommend is to go to YouTube and just look up Harvest Hills Ranch as well.

And I put out a content every single week. And just like I said earlier, you want to know who you're buying from, what their mindset is, what their philosophy and thought is around your food production.

You'll you'll learn pretty quick what mine is. I don't tend to bite my tongue very much on putting content out, so I want to I want people to know the truth that's out there.

That's great. And how would I? I mean, how do you estimate, like, how much of a cow do I need? Do I need a whole cow? Do I need half a cow? How many chickens you know?

Yeah, that's a great question. So I would say most individuals don't even need to consider a whole cow. That's just a whole cow is a lot of meat. Okay.

And I would say even most individuals probably don't. Really. If you've never experienced buying a share of beef, you probably don't even need to really consider a half.

Now, quarter makes sense for a lot of families because quarter cows are going to give you you're going to get good steaks. Grind out of that. You'll get some roast out of it.

So you'll get a good diversity of meat, and it'll generally last most families a couple of months. And so on the beef side, I would recommend starting there.

And the chicken is, for many individuals can be an easier entry point simply because the smallest bundles we have are going to be three chickens, three birds.

Okay. So and you know, we can give those to you as a whole or we can give them to you as cut. So whatever your preference is on that, I will say, and I always try to nudge this for individuals.

Most individuals are scared to cut chickens, but your real value is in a whole bird. And I've even got a video up on YouTube that you guys can check out.

It is so easy to cut a chicken. I mean, you can do it in no time flat, okay? And these chickens are already like plucked, right? Oh yeah. They're they're them.

They're just like you would most want. You would be accustomed to seeing them in the store. Right. They're they're what we call dress. So they they're just the skin of the bird.

All the internals have been removed. Okay. So the meat and the bones, you get the drumsticks, the breast, the thighs, and then the carcass. Great, great.

Well, before we wrap up, I'm going to let you give your your special introductory offer. Yeah. So what we've done, guys, is, like I said, we wanted to connect not just with the individuals that I have relationships with, but we want to support the, for example, the patients and the audience and the listeners of doctor Ward as well.

And so what we have, what we're offering is what we call our $50 gift card.

Ordering, Delivery, and Closing Remarks

So it's you go to our go to Doctor Ward's, and I guess maybe you'll have some follow up information as a, as a part of the podcast here too. Yes. But you guys can give $50 off of your initial order with Harvest Tools range.

And frankly, guys, we'd be honored to send it to you. Great. That's awesome. And you ship the meat, right? Do we ship into Texas and Louisiana? That's our primary method of delivery.

So literally, guys, we can put it right on your doorstep. That's awesome. That is so great. Yeah. Well, thank you so much for your time. And that was really fascinating to hear about the ranch.

I love the, you know, the organic and of, like, whole pasture raising of animals. I think that's wonderful. Where where is your ranch located? So we're over in East Texas.

We're in a little community called Hill Easter, Texas. I'll tell you a quick funny, when we moved out here, I got a map of the county, and the county had cities, towns, and communities.

We didn't qualify for a city or a town. We're only a community is pretty small. Yeah, so we're pretty small, but we're over here. The great thing about where we're at is we're in what's called the Piney woods.

And literally our ranch is surrounded by pine forest. So I don't have to worry about what neighboring ranches are doing or neighboring farms are doing as far as spraying chemicals and risking exposure to things like that is just not a consideration here.

Yeah, awesome. That is so great. Well, thank you for joining me on the functional Edge. I hope today's episode gave you fresh insights and practical tools to level up your life.

If you found value and what you heard, don't forget to hit subscribe and share the podcast with someone who

needs it and leave a review. It's the best way to support our mission of bringing powerful health solutions to more people.

So for more resources, updates, and behind the scenes content, visit Doctor Julia Worldcom. And until next time, stay strong, stay healthy, and keep living on the functional edge.