The Easy Plant Diet: Ocean Robbins And The Food Revolution Transcript

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Introduction to Ocean Robbins

– Well everybody welcome. Don't move, sit down, stand up, but just don't move because it's gonna be a really exciting, really informative, life changing interview and I'm so excited because I've been interviewed by Ocean Robbins and at times by his father, John Robbins, I've never had the pleasure of being in the hot seat here asking questions. It's gonna be easy because Ocean Robbins is a pro and just to introduce him, CEO of the 700,000 member Food Revolution Network, a big group of people that hunger for information from John and Ocean author of a great book, great book, 31 Day Food Revolution, heal your body, feel great and transform your world.

We'll talk about this. And although uh Ocean always looks youthful, he's actually been doing this a long time at age 16 and for the next 20 years founded youth for environmental sanity, also known as yes, spoken to hundreds of thousands of people and through his online Food Revolution Network seminars reached well over a million people in people in 65 countries won awards at Jefferson Award for outstanding public service was one of them. I just say truthfully, I'm excited to have you here. – Well, I'm thrilled to be with you, Joel and what an important topic we're here to talk about today.

– Yeah, reversing heart disease naturally is the overall theme of the summit, but a lot of it begins with what you do so well, The Food Revolution Network, the Food Revolution Summit.

Robbins Family Food Revolution Story

We're talking about broad range of topics in the summit, but food is medicine and food is the key here, so share with us because not everybody knows the family, the Robbins, family history, the story, the impact and you know, it's your life so share with us, it's maybe I'll just say it so transformed my own plant based journey as a medical doctor, a cardiologist to have encountered your father's book early on but go through that because it's amazing.

– Sure. Well, you know, the family story is pretty unique. My grandpa founded an ice cream company called Baskin Robbins, 31 flavors and my dad, John, grew up with 31 flavors of ice cream in the freezer and an ice cream cone shaped swimming pool. He was groomed to one day join in running the family company. But when he was in his early twenties 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 too as we jokingly put it in our family following his own rocky road and he ended up moving with my mom to a little island off the coast of Canada.

They grew most of their own food. They practiced yoga and meditation for several hours a day and they named their kid Ocean and by the way Joel, they almost named me Kale and this was way before Kale was cool.

I'm so grateful on behalf of my social life that they took the more conservative route when they named their son, but we did eat a lot of Kale and cabbage and carrots and other veggies from the garden and as I got a little older, we moved to California and my dad wound up writing a book called Diet for New America, which focused on how our food choices affect our health, our happiness and the future of life on earth.

And it became this runaway bestseller. And the media had a lot of fun with the story. They called him the Rebel without a cone, you know, the ice cream renegade and as fate would have it, one of his many readers ended up being my grandpa, Irv. Now my grandpa had lost his brother in law and business partner Burt Baskin to heart disease when my dad's uncle Burt was just 54 so my grandpa, you know, knew where the standard American diet could lead, but he continued to insist there was no connection between what we eat and our health and of course he had a lot of reason to be invested in that perspective, having manufactured and sold more ice cream than anyone who's ever lived.

But when he was in his early twenties, excuse me, let me say that again, When he was in his late sixties, he was given a copy of my dad's book by his doctors, who said Mr. Robbins, you have serious diabetes and heart

problems and weight problems and you're not going to live long unless you make big changes.

So my grandpa had ended up reading the copy of the book that my dad's a doctor that his doctors had given him and making big changes. And he wound up cutting way back on his meat consumption, eating way more fruits and vegetables. He gave up sugar, he even gave up ice cream and he got huge results. He reversed his heart disease, reversed his diabetes, lost a bunch of weight And added his golf game, improved seven strokes and he added 19 more healthy years to his life.

So we've really seen in our family that when we follow the standard American diet, like my dad's uncle, did we get the standard American diseases and we've also seen what's possible and we can make a change. And I'll tell you, you know, my grandpa made an incredible impact on the world with his business achievements.

But can you imagine how much courage it takes for a man like that to make such big changes, to give up ice cream for goodness sakes. And yet he wanted to live more than he wanted to be right. And so he made those changes and I think he's an inspiration to the rest of us because, you know, old habits die hard and a lot of us are stuck in our ways. My grandpa was a seriously stubborn cookie, but you know, he made big changes and you know, on his deathbed in his nineties, my dad and I were with him and he said, you know, thank God some of us have lived long enough to learn a few new things and you know, I'm inspired by that example and of course by my dad's work and so I'm so proud now that I get to work with my dad and trying to spread this message to all corners of the globe and really to change the way the world eats.

– And you know, the story just as leaves you with goose bumps, because you got your grandpa for so many extra years that you wouldn't have had them and uh too bad, you know, you're I guess would be a great uncle didn't get the message in the book as early in life, but what a wonderful, wonderful things for the Robbins family and you know, frankly it'd be very difficult to do a kale shaped swimming pool, just imagine how challenging that would be.

The Four-Part Food Revolution Framework

So, you grew up and I'm sure it was a lot of fun, but I'm happy for you that health has been such a mission for you. And you know, it's such a mission for you that you wrote an important book a couple of years ago book with so many unbelievably wonderful reviews.

And I wonder if you just share with us a little bit about, you know, when you write about the four step process that empowers you to detoxify nourish gather and transform your relationship with food because there are some really toxic relationship with food. So take your time.

And you know, people are watching this summit because they're hungry for practical steps, how do we do it? – So important. Because you know, for a lot of people, the problem isn't knowing what to do as actually doing what they know.

I mean after all, if all that was needed was we just knew we need to eat less sugar and processed junk and we need to eat more vegetables. You know, we wouldn't have an obesity epidemic, we wouldn't have 14 million people dying of heart disease every year around the world. But the truth is that a lot of folks know they need to eat better, they just don't know how to do it.

And so in 31 day Food Revolution, my central goal was he has to share the information, but more importantly to share the implementation tips based on having helped so many thousands of people implement these kinds of changes over, over the years. And so I divided the book into four parts and part one is detoxify and that focuses on getting rid of the bad stuff.

Kind of what is the cost of the status quo and how can we do better. Part two is nourished and that's saying yes to the good stuff. So, you know, you don't want to just get the bad stuff off your plate, the sugar and processed foods and the animal products and so forth.

You want to step into saturate in your body with the phyto nutrients, the anti oxidants, all the flavonoids, all the

beneficial compounds that you need to thrive.

And we look at what the studies say about things like mushrooms and green tea and and even coffee and and at things like kale and cabbage and all the cruciferous vegetables.

And we look at what the studies tell us about fruit and about legumes and about whole grains and about so many other incredibly potent disease fighting health boosting immune supporting compounds that are found primarily in whole plant foods.

And then in part three, we look at gathering and that's where we look at how we can really build our connection with other people because humans are very social creatures.

And you know, one of the, I think epidemics of the modern world, especially since the COVID pandemic is loneliness. You know, loneliness can kill faster than cigarettes.

And so many of us feel deep down, a sense of disconnection or isolation or sadness in our hearts. And so I'm saying, gosh, healthy eating shouldn't make you feel more isolated and disconnected.

It should be a doorway to help you feel more connected and when that happens you'll stick with it. So we look at how you can build social ties around healthy eating, how you can share food with friends and loved ones that helps you thrive, how you can, you know influence other people and to to eat better and healthier along with you. The notion of, you know, sharing meals that are healthy, having potlucks, how a family can coexist when they eat differently.

All these kinds of things are are incredible opportunities to bridge that gap and build social ties around healthy eating. And then the truth is when you have accountability, when you've got people who are cheering you on, you're much more likely to do the right thing. And then the last pieces transform and that's what we look at how our food choices are super political as well as personal.

You know, they shape the future of life on earth and they say to think globally and act locally. It turns out you can't get a lot more global or more local than the food on your plate.

And so there we look at things like how we can change the way food is growing, how we can help solve crises like world hunger, how we can contribute to reversing climate change, how we can contribute to a world where where pesticides and hormones and antibiotics and factory farms don't have to be the dominant principles of our food system, how we can grow healthy food and healthy soil that's regenerative and nourishing for our bodies and for our planet that trees, farmers and farm workers well and where animals don't have to be too tortured. And so the beauty of this is that by eating whole plant foods and sourcing locally and going more organic, you can actually make a huge impact on the planet.

So we look at all that and how you can be a food revolutionary three times every day and start to make choices that are aligned with your values. You know, I don't know anybody who wants to see, you know kids being enslaved to grow food, but in the modern chocolate industry that's happening.

So if you eat your mars bars or your Hershey's kisses, you don't know where that chocolate came from. But if it came from Ivory Coast in Ghana, which is where half the world's chocolate comes from, there's a pretty good chance that there were children enslaved in the production of some of it.

And so as somebody who doesn't want to be a part of that, I support Fair Trade when it comes to chocolate, I support Organic when it comes to chocolate because chocolate is an awesome healthy food in moderation, but you don't want to be supporting systems that are toxic or destructive of human life.

And so I think it's a wonderful opportunity we all have when we get informed to make our food choices expressions of our values, wow, that's that's powerful.

– And that's all in your book. I know when I read it, you know, that's certainly what I gleaned as I was enjoying it thoroughly. But for so many people, it's something they need to add to their wish list from this summit is to enjoy your book because you do make it very clear, um although it's a very high level goal to eat healthy and clean and avoid chemicals, everybody says it's too expensive for the average family and food prices are up.

So how do you do this without breaking the bank? – That's such an important piece.

Eating Healthy on a Budget

And you know, the there's this unfortunate mythos that that healthy eaters are have to be rich, but it's actually quite far from the truth now, it is true that a lot of folks can go to whole foods and come out having spent their whole paycheck, if you don't know how to do it right, because there's lots of profits in the natural foods industry that are coming from highly processed or exotic exotic fide Superfoods.

But to me, the real superfoods are super because they do the most good for the most people, not because of their high, super high price tags. And so I I looked at foods like basing diet around whole grains and legumes and vegetables like cabbage and carrots and onions and button mushrooms.

These are all super healthy foods that don't cost an arm and a leg, you know, getting fruits that are in season and also taking advantage of your freezer, you know, because freezing can actually preserve fruits and vegetables quite well and when you eat whole foods and their unprocessed form, you can actually really well on very little money, in fact, you can save tons of money because animal products are expensive.

You know when you, when you swap out beef for beans, you're going to save a ton of money as well as doing good for your health. That said, if you're looking to go a step further, here are a few of the principles for saving big while eating healthy one is cut out the waste. The average American family wastes about $2000 a year and food that just goes bad in the fridge and most of that is the healthy stuff that's perishable, not not the junky stuff in the cupboards.

So you want to emphasize, you know, using up your leftovers, making friends with leftovers, uh, cooking quantity, which will help you save time doesn't take twice as long to make twice as much and then put stuff in the freezer.

So you're kind of saving for a rainy day label with a little, you can get these washable labels on your, on your food when you put them in the fridge, what the date was and then make sure you put the older stuff in front.

So you use it up sooner. And then you know, if all else fails, throw a bunch of stuff in a pot and make a big stew, you know, and then gives it gives it a fresh life and then put some of that in the freezer if you don't want to eat it. All right away shop from a list instead of impulse purchasing, a lot of the impulse purchases tend to be the processed foods that cost the most that take attacks on your health. And that also end up replacing the perishable foods uh when you're going in your stomach for stomach space and that's why we get food waste. So when you shop from a list, you plan ahead and you plan intelligently doesn't mean you can't choose to buy some processed foods but do it intelligently and thoughtfully not on an impulse in the store.

And then um you know, you can also choose to, of course by the real staples like I mentioned earlier, base your diet around whole plant foods instead of processed junk or animal products and eat out less. You know, I mean eating that's wonderful.

I love restaurants. I know I used to run a restaurant. There are wonderful restaurateurs out there who are doing a beautiful thing and we should support them at the same time. Uh You know, if you want to save money, there's no question making food yourself is going to be cheaper.

And so for anybody who's concerned about that, you know, eat in more. And we tend to forget when we think of the time that it takes that it saves, they'll go to a restaurant, you forget the time it takes to drive there to pay for stuff. So when you plan it ahead and plan and shopping quantity, then you can save lots of time eating at home and making leftovers that then one day's dinner can be the next day's lunch and the next day's breakfast.

I have been known to eat dinners for breakfast. I don't always just eat so called breakfast foods and I think it's awesome. You know, kale and quinoa are good any time of day, right? So based on your diet around these wholesome healthy staples can end up saving loads of money and you know, if you want to go organic more power to you, it does cost more.

There's no argument about that. Organic foods are lower and pesticides, they're more sustainable. They're better for the farm workers who are working in the fields, they tend to be better for the planet, but not everyone can afford it. So don't make the perfect the enemy of the good.

When you hear about studies that show that people who eat a lot of kale tend to be healthier. Remember most of that kale eating in those studies was not growing organically and people still got the benefits.

So if you're choosing between, say non organic kale and organic donut, go for the kale. – So I'm still, you know, so touched by your grandpa Irv and the fact that later in life you reversed diabetes, reversed heart disease. Somebody listening today, this is a reverse your heart disease naturally summit with heart disease, excited. Going to go get your book for sure and they should, but I need particular tips, foods that you'd say, wow, you know, there's all kinds of great stuff but these are the top heart, you know, healthy choices to make on your journey.

– You know, heart disease is one condition and I'll say cardiovascular disease actually because of course it's a it's a bit broader than just the heart.

Heart-Healthy Foods and Soy

This is a, this is a situation where diet is phenomenally powerful and you know, the preponderance of evidence shows of course that getting away from saturated fat, getting away obviously from trans fats and getting away from sugar and hyper processed foods is important and eating more fiber is important and eating more plant foods of all kinds, you know from a certain perspective cardiovascular disease is at its core and an inflammation condition and so you want to bring down excessive inflammation in the body. And some of the most powerful anti inflammatory foods come from the plant kingdom for sure. And they're going to include things like of course turmeric, which we know is hugely powerful, especially when you have it with a little black or or or some fat of some kind as also spicy peppers are incredibly anti inflammatory. It's kind of counterintuitive because they sure flame up my mouth but you know, it seems that they bring down inflammation in the body through some remarkable mechanism. And then you know, of course all of the vegetables are amazing and legumes are powerful.

You know, I think it might be a number of things in them. They're high in protein. Plant based protein of course, but they're also high in fiber and we all need more fiber.

About 5% of the us population gets the recommended amount of fiber, even the recommendation is probably set too low. So you probably want to be getting 40 g of fiber a day if you can. And you know the average Americans getting like what, 10 or 15. And we're supposed to officially be getting up to 25 or 30. So fiber is really significant when it comes to health and you get that from whole plant foods nowhere else.

So you know those are some of the top foods but of course there are so many of them, it would be more significant to point to the overall dietary pattern than anyone food because of course the more of these things you eat the better.

But at the end of the day it's the collective of them that matters the most. And this is one place where a whole Foods Plant Center diet just absolutely shines agreed.

– Completely. And I just want to ask one more specific food and the Robbins, family gatherings, are you guys okay with soy? Perhaps tofu? Perhaps temp, perhaps Tamami certainly might make it on a heartless somewhere on there and just talk about that because the public is still so confused and to some degree uh afraid to add soy into their diet.

– I'm a big proponent of soy for most people now. I know there are some people who are allergic to all sorts of

different things and certainly soy is one thing that some people are allergic to. If that's the case then you want to obviously don't eat something you're allergic to and then see if you can shore up your body, bring down inflammation by giving it a break and then try it again in a little bits.

Start with fermented soy if that's the case because that sometimes is the easiest like Tempe for example, or miso. But unprocessed whole soy foods like tempeh and miso and edema may of course.

And also you can actually cook whole soybeans by the way. You can slightly sprout them first and then cook them and make them with baked beans or like any other leg. Lots of different delicious ways to enjoy them. Then there's there's of course tofu.

You know, some people struggle a bit with digestion which is where a little sprouting first can help for sure. It also reduces cooking time. So you know at the moment may not be the best for everybody, but for some people it's great. And then I personally love unsweetened soy milk. We make our own sometimes um or also eaten soy.

Makes an unsweetened soy milk, we get 12 g of soy protein per cup. It's nothing but organic soybeans and water super potent no added sugars. And I enjoy I enjoy drinking that I enjoy putting it as a base for smoothies.

I enjoy cooking oatmeal in it in fact, um and you're getting this huge protein boost. And the thing about soy proteins is that they seem to be uniquely potent in supporting cardiovascular health and also fighting cancer and other conditions.

There's been this kind of belief widely propagated that. So I will give man boobs that it that it will increase risk of cancer, especially for women, turns out that's not the case at all.

There there is no evidence that that soy gives men memory expansion and in fact it's linked to lower rates of cancer of just about every type study. But particularly all of the hormone related cancers turns out that there's something called phyto estrogens in soy which are also in flax and some other plant compounds, but they're most of all found in soy. And um they turn out to have this remarkable characteristic which is that they can be estrogenic when it's helpful and they're not estrogenic when it isn't helpful. So it's sort of like goldilocks, you know, not too much, not too little, just the right amount.

And uh so I think that phyto estrogens turn out to be really, really helpful. And there's been a fear that they would be, you know, estrogen producing compounds. And they can be in the right space.

But again, the body seems to know what to do with them to use them well, which it can't necessarily do with estrogen per se. So concerned about hormonal health. The best thing to do is to stay away from dairy products because lactating mammals that are pumped full of hormones produce a lot of hormone compounds that can be detrimental to and are linked to things like breast cancer as well as inflammation in the human body. But don't blame phyto estrogens, they seem to be great for us.

– Yeah, I couldn't agree more. You said it eloquently. Yeah, I go through with a lot of patients, David Jenkins portfolio diet plan and it has four pillars, one of which is to increase your soy products to lower your cholesterol.

And then there's three other pillars and that's where I see people start to recoil and we talk about adding organic tofu and stir fry instead of chicken.

What a simple substitution and the joy is your cholesterol. They go down and very, very dense in fiber. So you said it so well a lot of people may know you from your amazing online work and your daily emails and the upcoming food revolution summit that I want you to talk about at the end. So everybody make sure to sign on and participate.

Gratitude, Purpose, and Health

But there's like a sense of energy and radiating wonderfulness about you that anybody that's been with, you can't help but notice and I know you you actually lecture sometimes on gratitude and, you know, a heart patients would

benefit from learning a bit about gratitude to just speak about that a little bit. – To me life isn't just about survival, it's about thriving, and health is a means to a greater end in my perspective.

So we can do what we were born to do, and so we can love our lives. And there's a growing body of research showing that when people feel stressed and worn out and exhausted and purposeless, it's bad for their health, and that creates a vicious circle because of course, when you're in pain and when you're suffering, when you're scared, you're more likely to be stressed, you're less likely to take take exciting risks or to step boldly into new opportunities.

Your world gets smaller. There's the old saying that a person with their health has 1000 dreams, a person without, it has just one dream, and that's to get it back.

And so I'm passionate about health because it's a positive feedback loop because it helps us get on the right side of our own lives and our own destiny.

So we can start to do what we were born to do and love our lives more, and the other side of it, along with health is using whatever health we've got whatever breath in our lungs, we have whatever whatever creativity we have in constructive ways, so that we feel better and more alive. So we have something to live for when you have a vision or dream for where you're going, you're far more likely to make long term beneficial choices. You know, if you're only trying to survive today and just getting through and coping with another miserable day is all that's at stake.

Then a donut looks really appealing. But if you're thinking about who you're gonna be in 30 years and how you're going to age and what you want for your life, then a donut does not look appealing when you realize what it's actually going to do to you right short term gain long term disaster.

But when you, when you make healthy choices, you can also create the foundations where it's easier to have vision and dream and possibility and mental clarity and mental health and less depression and more joy and more purpose.

Gratitude is one of the most powerful ways to cultivate a sense of pleasure and optimism in life. When you just take time to feel the things you're grateful for and think about them, it can make a huge difference.

My wife and I have practiced this by the way, sometimes we get in a fight, you know, a conflict whatever you wanna call it and we're like girl like this and then and then you know, we will practice each of us say one thing we appreciate about the other one and we're going back and forth like that three times and even if the first one is super lame, like thanks for doing one dish for a change this morning, you know, like by the end we're actually appreciating each other and it's so disarming to feel appreciated and suddenly we're in connection again and then suddenly whatever we were arguing about seems far less important than the love we share.

And so I think that's a principle of life in a sense. And so there have been studies that have found that people who take five minutes at the end of the day to write down three things they're grateful for every day for as little as 10 days, literally their blood pressure goes down, their their their longer term, their marriages survive more, they live longer, they live better.

You know, I always thought that gratitude was for people who were lucky. It's like yeah, sure. It's easy to be grateful if you won the lottery. But what about the rest of us? You know, like does gratitude really make things get better? Or does it just focus on, is it just for the privilege? Well it turns out it doesn't just help you reflect on the good things that have happened to you.

It actually makes more good things happened to you and it's not just that you're focusing on the half full side of the glass, you're actually filling the glass up when you're more grateful, you're more heartful, you're more in reciprocity with the benefits of life and you're more less likely to react be reactive in the face of stress, you're more likely to have an immune system that functions well, you're less likely to get sick, you'll bring down inflammation in your psyche and in your physical body.

And I think that's absolutely fascinating and it's so easy, it feels good and it also helps you feel actually do good in your life. – That's well said, and I couldn't agree more. I have one small ritual every morning before I touch a phone or get out of bed and it's a brief expression of gratitude because there's no guarantee that you're going to open your eyes and have a body that's healthy in the morning. So if you do, you're just gifted with something magnificent. So thank you for sharing that.

You put out incredible content. And tell people, I really do read and enjoy your emails that come with medical references and they're very solidly written. Where do people go to find your website and sign up for that. – So you can find our website at foodrevolution.org and we have thousands of blog articles on there completely for free.

And we also have a bunch of courses and master classes and other resources.

Where to Find Food Revolution Resources

You can also register for our Food Revolution Summit, where we interview some of the top food experts on the planet and every year we update with the latest and greatest insights and of course, Joel, we've been thrilled to have you in there for many, many years in a row. That's at foodrevolutionsummit.org and you can also check out 31 day Food Revolution, which is the book that I wrote, you can get that online or maybe from bookstores and that's 31, 3 1, day Food Revolution.

And you know, most importantly you find us in your own heart, every time you make healthy food choices, every time you choose real food over process junk, every time you serve healthy food to a kid or a loved one or someone you care about every time you make a choice to purchase something that's organic or fair trade or plant based, you're taking a stand, you're contributing to the food revolution and I thank you for it.

And I'd like to say, you know, remember you're not alone in that there's more and more people that are taking these steps together. I think we're changing the course of history, – I agree. And I will say as somebody who's been very fortunate to participate in your summit FoodRevolutionSummit.org, which will be about a month after this summit. People don't want to miss it because the content is so high quality and that's a tribute to the great love there is for you and your father and the impact you've had on health around the world.

So I want to thank everybody for allowing you to take time away from your family and share with us with passion, with enthusiasm, with eloquence, why you wrote a book and what your amazing background is. You do have children, right?

– Yes. I have identical twin sons. They are 21 years old. – Unbelievable. You don't look like that's possible and you hesitated and resisted. There is your name.

One of them, Kale. – That was not hard. But we did win name one of them River. We have Bodhi and River. And you know, the ocean refuses no river. – Oh, wow, how perfect! And that wonderful personal note will set this down. Thank you so much in regard to your father.

– Thank you so much.