

EPISODE 215

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:10] AVH: Welcome everyone to the podcast, thanks for being here, thanks for joining me. I want to start off this podcast by giving away some free resources because I'm a giver like that. I think the only thing better than useful health information is free useful health information, right? *Paleo Magazine* is switching things up a little bit regarding their website and their online content.

They're going to be offering up a few free articles every month for non subscribers. This is exclusive web content, this isn't just recycled stuff. We're going to be posting a bunch more on the website including exclusive recipes, blog post, workout ideas and a lot of other content.

Hopefully it will be some use to you and maybe even entice you or someone else that you're trying to convince to just subscribe already and enjoy the magazine. Either way, head over to paleomagonline.com, check out some of this new content that we're putting up there, there was a recipe the other day that just went up for the smoothie, that looked amazing. I haven't tried it yet but if you try it, let me know.

If you like what you're seeing on the website or if you have any recommendations or suggestions for anything else you want to see, or if you just want to say hi, send us a note on any of our social media accounts @paleomagazine, chances are, it will be me that you're talking to and we can have a chat. So that's that.

Today's podcast is with Sophie Van Tiggelen. She is the creator of the popular food blog Squirrel in the Kitchen, which is an adorable name by the way, and I ask her about it. She just wrote a cookbook called *The Autoimmune Protocol Made Simple*.

She is yet another positive, helpful force in the paleo and AIP community, she's helping us sort through the extremely complicated issue of gut health and autoimmune issues to get to our best healthiest selves. I think that this is a great, easy to digest, pun intended, see what I did there?

Fun interview and I really hope you enjoy it. Without further ado, here is my interview with Sophie.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:02:13.4] **AVH:** Sophie, welcome to the podcast, thank you so much for being here.

[0:02:17.4] **SVT:** Thank you so much Ashley for having me today. So much fun to be talking with you.

[0:02:21.3] **AVH:** I noticed that we both have Van last names, is your last name Dutch?

[0:02:26.0] **SVT:** From origin, yes, Van Tiggelen.

[0:02:28.6] **AVH:** Yes, okay, yeah, mine is Van Houten and it's Dutch as well and no one really every knew how to pronounce it growing up and I really had to kind of like grow into my last name. I don't know if you had the same problems but where I was from, everybody was Scottish or Irish, everyone was like, named McKenzie or McIsaac and no one ever knew how to pronounce my last name but I've kind of grown attached to it now.

[0:02:49.6] **SVT:** Yeah, it looks like yours is more difficult to spell than mine if I'm not mistaken.

[0:02:54.9] **AVH:** Maybe, I don't know, I mean, I feel like – I wouldn't be surprised if you had a lot of issues with your last name growing up too. I mean, you know, I think what is kind of maybe tough when you were a kid makes you a little bit more unique when you're an adult, so that's okay, right?

[0:03:08.2] **SVT:** Yeah. We're all unique snowflakes.

[0:03:10.6] **AVH:** There you go, yeah. Well, on that note, I would love for you to just introduce yourself to our listeners and kind of tell us who you are and what you do. Just kind of your back story.

[0:03:20.4] SVT: All right. I'm Sophie and we are just going to ditch the last name, it's too difficult. I'm Sophie from the blog Squirrel in the Kitchen and my story is that I'm an autoimmune blogger which means that I got into trouble in 2009 after a month of dealing with anxiety, severe insomnia, trips to the emergency room, seeing many doctors and all my lab tests coming back just fine.

I was finally diagnosed with Hashimoto's which is an autoimmune disease attacking the thyroid. I was put on medication and I started a gluten free diet because I thought I would just be fine. Then life went on and in 2012 I started to have very severe joint pain. It was totally crippling, I couldn't walk anymore.

At that time, I started doing some research online and I found blogs from people like Sarah Balentine and Mickey Trescot and Eileen Laird. All who had been going through not the same story because they each had their own autoimmune disease, but they had used autoimmune products to address their symptoms and put their disease into remission.

You know, I was in so much pain, I had nothing to lose so I decided to jump right in and experienced very rapid improvement in my health. I decided a few years later to start blogging about it because one, I wanted to stay motivated myself and stay on the diet and two, I wanted to spread the message and tell people how you can feel better by changing the food you eat.

That's pretty much it and then one year after I started blogging, I wrote my first cookbook, see *The French Paleo* and then I just finished writing my second cookbook which is *The Autoimmune Protocol Made Simple* and it's coming out June 12 this year.

[0:05:28.7] AVH: Very exciting. Okay, when you were diagnosed with Hashimoto's and you kind of took it upon yourself to learn and do some research about diet and you kind of started addressing your issues through this autoimmune protocol diet, was that, over time, was that really all you needed or were there other interventions, are you still on medication today or is that done?

[0:05:50.1] SVT: Yes, that's a very good question and for me, because it's going to be different for everyone, right? Because if you had a different autoimmune disease and even if we had the

same, the spectrum is so large like some people can have it like, just a little bit so it might just have started for them while for the people, it might have started 20 years ago.

That's important. The difference is important to note and for some people, the diet will be enough. For me it wasn't. I have to continue to take my thyroid medication now and then I'm also working with a fantastic doctor, not just a regular doctor, he is a functional medicine practitioner.

This means that he's going to look at the root cause of what is ailing me. Not just giving me a pill to treat the symptoms but also try to find why I became ill and can we address this, so we can stop the disease and we can also prevent other disease from starting.

Working with him, I'm taking also nutritional support and been doing acupuncture, I've been doing nutritional IV's and the lifestyle piece is very important too for me, exercise and stress reduction.

[0:07:12.7] AVH: As you said, they're sort of a scale of severity in terms of autoimmune disorders. Is there a way if you catch it before it's very bad or before you need medical intervention? Can you completely reverse things like Hashimoto's? Or is it only that you can put it into remission and you're kind of always going to be susceptible to flare ups? Is it possible to get rid of it entirely or is it once you have it, you have it and you have to manage it?

[0:07:39.6] SVT: Yeah, I'm afraid that the answer is that once you have it, you have it which means that once you have turned on the switch of autoimmune disease, you can't turn it off right now. Maybe they will find a way in the future. I'm hoping they will.

Right now, you can't. But this isn't bad because you can put it into remission and remission means that you bring back your empty body's down to a normal level which is considered like normal and which means that you are not attacking yourself anymore, you don't have the symptoms anymore and you live a totally normal life like everyone else.

Actually, it's a pretty good place to be in, even if it's just remission.

[0:08:24.4] AVH: Right, okay. Your new book, the book that's coming out very soon, *The Autoimmune Protocol Made Simple*. You talk a lot about what an autoimmune protocol diet really is and how to incorporate it into your life without feeling like you're being restricted.

Because I think that's one of the biggest hurdles with any diet, right? It's so much the mental approach, it's feeling like you are being restricted or like there are things that you can't partake in and it's not sustainable. I think that's one of the really biggest issues.

It's easy to talk about the things you can't eat on any diet, whether it's AIP or paleo or whatever. That's kind of like a negative spin that doesn't really help people, right? I think it's better to kind of approach it from what you can eat and what healthful foods you should eat to make yourself feel better.

Can you talk a little bit, instead of let's focus on what we can eat, can you talk a little bit about what foods are generally okay and health promoting on an AIP diet and I know that can vary a little bit.

[0:09:21.0] SVT: Yeah. That's a very good observation that you are making, like the mindset switch, it's very important, don't look at what you can't eat, look at what you can. Also, I would go even further and say, don't see the autoimmune protocol as a diet, but see it as a new lifestyle, as the right way to eat that will promote your health.

On the yes list, for the foods to eat on the autoimmune protocol, you have all the vegetables and fruit except the night shades. The night shades will be vegetables like bell pepper, eggplant, goji berries, hot peppers, potatoes, tomatoes and so besides these, the night shades, they tend to exacerbate joint pain for certain people with autoimmune disease. All the other vegetables and fruit are allowed on the autoimmune protocol, which is a lot.

I tell you, at the beginning of the autoimmune protocol, I made a lot of discoveries like I expanded it, actually, my repertoire so much. After vegetables and fruits, meat, organ meat, fish, shellfish, they're all acceptable, ferments like kombucha, kabas, lacto fermented fruits and vegetables, sauerkraut and water kefir. Healthy fats, so stay away from anything that's over

processed and I would recommend avocado oil, coconut oil, olive oil or bacon fat, duck fat, lard, tallow, all those are allowed.

Go for natural sweeteners like coconut sugar, dates, dried fruit, honey, maple sugar and molasses. Then, there are some foods that you have to consume in moderation, this doesn't mean that they are not allowed on AIP but you know, keep it on the low, all the treats and baked goods, that are circulating now on the internet.

These are the treats that you make with AIP approved ingredients but are still considered treats because they are just too high in sugar. Go easy on the coconut products, on the fructose, maximum of 20 grams of fructose per day which is about 2-3 servings of fruits. Green and black tea is okay too but go easy.

[0:11:42.0] AVH: No coffee?

[0:11:43.7] SVT: No, no coffee. Coffee is not allowed.

[0:11:46.7] AVH: What about?

[0:11:47.8] SVT: That's in the nuts and seeds and nuts and seeds are not allowed, to give you a run through what is not allowed – no grains, no gluten, no beans and legumes, no night shades, I already mentioned that.

Eggs and dairy are out, nuts and seeds and everything that's overly processed and everything that can be called and manmade, stay away from all that.

[0:12:11.7] AVH: Is there any circumstance where I feel like I may have read this somewhere that depending on, because often, there are layers to autoimmune issues or maybe even gut health issues and that sometimes fermented foods or certain fermented foods or maybe too much fermented foods can be problematic. Are you saying that that's not necessarily the case usually?

[0:12:33.3] SVT: Well, the foods that are excluded on the autoimmune protocol are the ones that are recognized as being inflammatory and that will create or promote leaky gut or diseases.

Those are for the general population and then you know, some of us might suffer from you know, additional little problems on the side and that's when for example, some of us will have some bloating or excess gas or intestinal troubles and that's when you might have to stay away from fermented foods for some time.

I'm not very a specialist in this issue but you know, it's sometimes referred as the low ferment diets. I don't know if you have heard this before but anyway, it's always considered to be a temporary adjustment also. You know, the purpose is to try to keep as much ingredients or food in your diet as you can, not to remove them.

[0:13:37.4] AVH: How long – again, I know that a lot of these questions have to be sort of generalized because depending on people's different challenges and issues are facing, things are going to be different. How long generally can someone expect to be on a strict AIP diet before the can start to see improvements, start to see changes but then also, start to consider reintroducing certain things back in that they want to test.

[0:14:05.0] SVT: Yeah, that's a difficult question to answer because when you start the autoimmune protocol, people have heard about it and they think, it's really hard, that is very restrictive. Once again, here, it's very good to change your mindset but usually, people will see improvement pretty quickly within one month and by the way, Sarah Ballantyne recommends in her book, *The Paleo Approach* to stay on the strict elimination phase of the autoimmune protocol for a minimum of one to three months.

You know, to just give a chance for your body to heal and to lower the inflammation. For most people, you know, you will see the improvement pretty quickly. That doesn't mean that it's already time to start the reintroductions or go back to the way you were eating before.

In my case, I had to stay on the strict elimination diet for a year before all my symptoms were gone. That's a pretty long time but I didn't even see this as being restricted period, I was just being patient and being kind with myself and focusing on the good and the positive.

You will know that it's time to start the reintroductions when you're symptoms are gone and that your digestion is well back on track and you're feeling good and you don't have anything major going on in your life, then you can start reintroducing foods, one by one.

[0:15:36.1] AVH: Right, you mentioned that of course, there are always cording elements that are going to help with this process and help with your gut health and your digestion and all of these things and of course we all know things like getting the sleep and stress management. A lot of people I think have such dysfunction, you know, digestively and in their guts that a lot of times – I've talked to people personally that this has been the case that have gone on these elimination diets and still are having a really hard time with digestion, their symptoms aren't necessarily going away and it is because maybe their guts are so inflamed and damaged from eating the wrong way for so long that they are having trouble even when they are eating really strict, really good food. So in that case I know you mentioned this earlier, maybe talking to a functional medicine practitioner or reaching out to somebody who can assist with that would be pretty important right?

Because I know that I feel like a lot of people get frustrated when they're doing all of the right things food wise and they're still having these digestive issues, they are still having these problems and they can't figure out where to go from there.

[0:16:41.9] SVT: Yes, absolutely. That's why working with a functional medicine practitioner, a doctor or a nutritionist is very important because there might be something else going on at the same time in your gut, a co-infection that yes, you will need first to diagnose. So you will need someone that can order the lab test and someone that can read results and who will be able to help you overcome these side infections with targeted supplements.

Or you may have to go through a round of antibiotics who knows? So when the diet isn't really helping or if you are hitting a plateau and you don't see any more improvement, don't just stop the diet. You have been doing the right thing, but it is just time to call in someone and to go and see an expert.

[0:17:36.3] AVH: Right, do you have any tips for people who are trying to find either a regular doctor or a functional medicine doctor, somebody who will be open to a really kind of holistic

pro-active approach, a really nutrition based approach rather than just immediately going to medication? Because I think a lot of people don't know where to go and then they're maybe intimidated when they see doctors to bring these ideas up and say, "This is how I want to approach it" and they just take the doctor's advice without having a discussion about it. So do you have any tips for how people can find a doctor who they can work with on something like this?

[0:18:14.2] SVT: Yes, definitely and actually this is a question I do get very often. So often actually that I wrote, I dedicated an entire blog post to this question and I will make sure that I send it to you Ashleigh and we can put it in the notes of the podcast. So people can go in there and read the blog post. Basically, there are different ways, there are different websites that you can use online to find those practitioners. You enter your zip code and a search will come up or there are different listings.

I don't have all that in mind right now I'm afraid, but I would definitely advise people to go and read the blog post. Otherwise you know there are programs that are starting to come out online targeted to help people with healing with the autoimmune protocol. For example, Sarah Ballantyne, Nikki Prescott, just came out with an AIP coaching program. So people are starting to graduate from these program and these are the people you can really work with to start a functional approach.

[0:19:23.4] AVH: Right and you mentioned a couple of times additional supplements as well as the food side of it. What are some of the supplements that you are using that you find are helping you?

[0:19:33.5] SVT: Yes, so supplements. That's a touchy subject, you have to be careful because firstly, all supplements are not equal, right? The supplements that you can only access through a doctor's office and then there are the supplements that you can go and buy yourself at the grocery stores and the ingredients are not the same. You have to be very careful if you do this yourself. Read the ingredients and make sure that there is no nasty ingredient or even gluten in there that you can't have.

So that would be my first recommendation. Second, I have been taking supplements but I never went out and bought a supplement by myself. They all have been recommended to me by my doctor and I follow his advice. So you know it's like the basics, you have the fish oil, you have the multivitamins, you have the probiotics, you have the vitamin D and then after that you have all the supplements that are really targeted for your specific needs and that they vary for everyone.

[0:20:35.9] AVH: Okay, I guess one thing that I want to mention because I think people maybe don't really see it this way but I think that the autoimmune protocol that you talk about in your book is something that isn't just for people who are dealing with autoimmune disease, right? It's not just for people with Hashimoto or thyroid issues or what have you. It could be used for anybody who is even really trying to reset their eating, their approach to food, or anyone who is having any kind of food or nutrition related symptoms.

And they just want to cut back and just focus on sort of the cleanest approach and then the reintroduction process, which I think is probably a good idea for a lot of people to do and maybe sometimes people don't even realize that some of their symptoms are food related because they are so used to experiencing them, right? So, would you say that this is something that would be safe and even beneficial for anyone to try?

[0:21:28.9] SVT: Absolutely. It is for autoimmune disease, for chronic illness, for any inflammatory disease, for allergies, it's good for everyone. This is one of the super clean diets because it rests only on whole unprocessed untouched food. So in my opinion, it's the best you can find. It's the best you can feed your body with. So any kind of symptoms you might have, even if it is not like a clinical diagnosis, by lowering the inflammation in your body you will benefit from this.

You are just going to clean up your entire digestive track and you're going to feel so much better after and the second part of the answer is that you talk about the reintroduction process. Yes, I talk with a lot of people and sometimes they don't realize that symptoms they have might be attributed to some kind of food tolerance like runny nose, itchy eyes all the time or headaches or scratchy skin, all of these kinds of little discomfort that you don't go to the doctor to talk about. You just think they are okay. They might go away if you clean up your diet.

[0:22:48.7] AVH: Right. So another thing that I'd like to talk about in addition to the book is your blog and your website and you've got a ton of great recipes. I think everyone should check this out. It's squirrelinthekitchen.com but where does this name come from?

[0:23:06.1] SVT: Well because if you go on my blog you will see a picture of me. I am a redhead and it's a big mane and it is very curly and it is a little bit like the tail of a squirrel.

[0:23:17.4] AVH: So is that a nickname someone gave you or you gave yourself?

[0:23:20.2] SVT: Yeah, it is my nickname in the family yes.

[0:23:23.0] AVH: Okay, I like that. All right, so what are some easy or some of your favorite maybe meals or snack ideas that are simple, that are AIP compliant, that could please anybody right? So if you are having some friends over for dinner and you don't want to be the person who says, "I have to eat this strict way" you just want to make a nice meal or you want to make a nice snack, what are some things that you are doing right now or that you are really into?

[0:23:47.7] SVT: Yeah, my go-to is just a roast chicken in the oven. Everybody loves that and it always feels so gourmet, especially if you add herbs and little things around it. So I always go for a roast chicken and then roasted vegetables on the side and some raw vegetable maybe some shredded carrots. I always like to add some fresh herbs. So eating healthy is actually very easy. I am trying to think about – I love everything that is slow cooked because it is so easy.

You throw everything in the slow cooker and then viola, it's ready a few hours later. Any kind of pulled pork is always fantastic and it smells so good in the kitchen and you just serve this with little tortillas and little things on the side and it is always a winner.

[0:24:38.0] AVH: And what about snacks? Because I feel like for me when I want an easy healthy paleo snack, I am often picking up nuts or seeds or even boiled eggs or something. A lot of those things are not going to be okay when you are first doing the elimination diet. So what are some easy snacks that people can pick up? I guess fruit is always a good option right?

[0:24:59.5] SVT: Yes, definitely. Fruit is a good option although remember don't go crazy on fruit either. Maximum two to three servings per day and it's better to favor berries because they have lower fructose content and this didn't make my kids very happy. One of my favorite snacks was just canned sardines, I know that's bizarre.

[0:25:24.1] AVH: That's a popular one with paleo people. You don't have to convince us about that. Actually most of us I think we're pretty – well I know I am a pretty big fan of sardines anyway, or canned oysters even.

[0:25:34.6] SVT: Yes and then I love pickled vegetables, you can make them yourself or it's possible to find ones that are AIP approved. They have a brand at whole foods, I don't remember it right now at the top of my head. Just make sure you read the ingredients but they have dill pickles that are AIP compliant. I always loved those too and then also I used leftovers as snacks. Leftover meat, leftover vegetables, these would be my snacks too.

[0:26:05.1] AVH: Yeah, leftovers are always key. That's important and I think one of the great things about your book is you've got a ton of recipes and as you said earlier, it is about what you can eat not what you can't and you'll be amazed when you do delve into this AIP protocol that there are way more foods you can eat than foods that you can't. There are so many ways that you can dress it up and make it fun and make it delicious.

And it doesn't have to be like the sentence that you are going to be sad about and feel put upon. You can really enjoy it and I think that that's awesome that you are providing that resource for people. So can you tell our listeners where they can find out more about you online, on social media and where they can buy the book?

[0:26:47.7] SVT: Yes, definitely. So they can find me on my blog, Squirrel in the Kitchen, and I am also very active on social media but mostly Instagram, Facebook and Pinterest. So you can find those by going to my blog and then there are little icons that you can click on it and find me on social media and then my cookbooks, my first one is available on Amazon. And my new one, which is my new baby, I am very proud of it and excited.

It is coming out June 12, you can find it everywhere in the US. You can pre-order on Amazon right now and you can also find it in UK, Australia and Canada.

[0:27:29.2] AVH: Very nice, good so all of our listeners can enjoy it. Great, well thank you so much Sophie for your time. I really appreciate it and we'll put all of that information in the show notes so folks can learn more from you and check out your awesome recipes and we'll take advantage of that book when it comes out and congratulations on your new book as well.

[0:27:45.9] SVT: Thank you so much Ashleigh.

[0:27:47.1] AVH: All right, take care.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:27:52.4] AVH: All right everybody thanks as always for listening. If you pick up the book and are helped by it, as always let us know on social media. We want to hear your feedback so talk to us @paleomagazine or you can talk to me personally @themusclemaven and you know, we want your feedback so bad in fact that I am enticing you to leave a review on iTunes by offering you free stuff which I don't know, it seems sleazy when I say it that way.

But it is more like you tell us what you think and we reward you for your feedback. So anyway, if you leave a nice review and a rating on iTunes and if I read it on the podcast, we would be happy to send you some Paleo Mag swag of your choice, so you can rock a cool stainless steel water bottle or a tank top or something like I do every day. Perhaps I need to expand my fashion choices, I don't know.

Anyway, next week we have professional bio-hacker and health, fitness and longevity expert, Ben Greenfield on the podcast. He is a big deal, especially a big deal to me because I followed him very closely and I listen to his podcast all the time. I can't tell you what a journey it's been to get this guy on the podcast. He is so busy and I finally managed to get him an interview like a month ago only to find out after the fact that his half of the interview didn't record.

And I am going to go ahead and blame this on Ben just because he is not here to defend himself because certainly part of it was my fault. But he also lives off the grid like in the woods

somewhere and has a crazy internet connection set up. So anyway, Ben sorry, I am going to blame you for this one but I did manage to track him down for a quick chat at Paleo f(x) in Austin a few weeks ago which is what you are going to listen to next week.

And anyone who knows Ben knows that he can fit a lot of very helpful and cutting edge and sometimes straight up weird information and advice into a very short time. So you definitely don't want to miss this one, subscribe to the podcast, you can hear me and Ben talk about bio hacking next week and that's it, thanks for listening.

[OUTRO]

[0:29:55.8] AV: Paleo Magazine Radio is brought to you by the Paleo Media Group and is produced by We Edit Podcasts. Our show music features the song *Light It Up*, by Morgan Heritage and Jo Mersa Marley, and on behalf of everyone at *Paleo Magazine*, thank you for listening.

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