

EPISODE 244

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:10] AVH: Hey everybody, thank you for being with me today. I am your host, Ashleigh VanHouten, this is paleo magazine radio and I hope you're having a great week.

Today, I am chatting with Marni Wasserman, she went from a vegetarian to paleo-ish to deal with health struggles and address an autoimmune disease and she has a very popular website and a podcast, called The Ultimate Health Podcast as well as a bunch of cookbooks and these days, she's talking about a plant based paleo approach where most of which you're eating is vegetables and protein is kind of the add on or the side dish which is a popular approach in many cultures and from a lot of perspectives.

I personally approach it kind of the other way. I always feel the best when I got to have a big hunk of meat on my plate and then I garnish it with some delicious vegetables but that's just what I found works for me. That's the beauty of this podcast is that we can talk about different approaches and try to find the one that makes you feel the best. We all need to find our happy place or our happy plate, get it? See what I did there? So clever.

Anyway, we all have our ideal healthy plates, they're all going to look a little bit different so we need to maybe spend a little bit less time judging other people's plates and more time trying to make ours the best that it can be. Today, Marni and I are going to discuss how she made the transition from an ethical, mental and even a gut health standpoint and how she was able to build a supportive and healthy community to do that.

I hope you enjoy the episode but first, here is a little bit about our show sponsor, The Metabolic Health Summit. I actually interviewed one of the founders of this summit, Victoria Field in episode 240. Please go back and listen to that episode because she has a great story, she's done a lot of really cool research and it's worth a listen and one of the other cohost of this event, Dr. Dom D'Agostino who is a pretty big deal in the ketogenic and metabolic health world. I interviewed him as well and he is going to be a guest in the new year so you definitely don't want to miss that one.

Okay, going back to our sponsors. The annual Metabolic Health Summit, it's going to be in Los Angeles at the end of January in 2019, it's a four day event hosted by Don D'Agostino where you can learn the latest science on the ketogenic diet and metabolic therapy from world renowned scientist, the rest of physicians and top influencers like your friend and mine, Mark Sisson, Rob Wolf, exercise science researcher, Dr. Jeff Volek, nutrition researcher, Dr. David Ludwig, cancer biology researchers, much more, tons and tons of smart people at this event.

From what I can tell, it seems like it's a really good mix of high level science and research based sessions information as well as nightly networking and kind of fun get together, there's lots of new technologies and nutrition brands that you can interact with, there's even a VIP gala dinner that you can get tickets too or all the speakers and influencers are going to be there, hanging out. Portion of the ticket sales go to charities like the Charlie Foundation for ketogenic therapies and the max love project which helps kids thrive in the face of cancer and life threatening illnesses.

There's a lot going on, if you are interested in a space, if you're learning about it for yourself, maybe you're in the medical field, maybe you're just interested in keto and you want to hang out with a bunch of smart people in LA, no judgments, all great reasons to go to this thing. If you're interested in learning more or going to the event, you can check it all out at metabolicealthsummit.com and if you use the code `paleomhs19`, you'll get 20% off, any of the tickets that you buy to head to this event.

That's that, pretty sweet deal and I hope you enjoy the podcast.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:03:55.2] AVH: Hey Marni, welcome to the podcast.

[0:03:57.5] MW: Thanks for having me Ashleigh.

[0:03:59.0] AVH: Yeah, thank you for being here. Before we get into any of the sort of individual questions that I personally have for you because that's one of the things I love about

podcasting, is I get to selfishly ask the questions that I'm interested in and hope other people are interested in it too.

I'd love if you could kind of just give us a little bit of background and tell us your story real quick.

[0:04:19.0] MW: Sure. I'll kind of go back to school because that's where the passion started which was in health and fitness, I was in kinesiology and health sciences and from there, I realized that the body and nutrition, worked so well together. I needed to learn more about that so I went into nutrition, I went into dietetics for a very short period of time and realized that dietetics was way too limiting, it needed to be more about prevention.

What I was focused on was giving food to people and showing people how to eat for nourishment, not how to help them in a clinical setting. When I made that decision and realization, I went into holistic nutrition which was everything I was looking for. I did that for two years, then I went on to culinary school in New York and did my chef training and with that background, I stemmed into cooking classes as the starting point of my career. Was doing cooking classes and the first part of my business and I'm sure we'll get into this later, was focused on vegetarian cooking classes because I was vegetarian at the time.

I started plant based cooking classes, I wrote a book, *Plant Based Diet for Dummies*, my whole world was wrapped up in that message and teaching and educating people on how eating more plants was the way to go and at that time, I was thriving and feeling great and my business grew, I expanded into opening up my own space, I started it first, the cooking classes in my parent's home and that grew so well that I went into my own space and did workshops, retreats, events, everything around healthy living lifestyle and plant based eating.

Slowly, over the years as I started to pay attention to my health and what was going on. I started to decide that - I realized that this wasn't the right fit for me long term in terms of teaching cooking classes. But it's funny, at the same time, I was always starting with my now husband, he was my boyfriend at the time, doing a podcast. That was going at the same time as the cooking classes, I delved into the podcast world and now we've kind of stepped into that full time and at the same time I've also transitioned my whole lifestyle, how I've eaten. It all kind of went hand in hand.

A shift in career and a shift in diet and lifestyle, so it's been a really interesting journey so now what I'm focused on is the podcast as well as doing a lot of online educating through social media, doing a lot of talking at events through private platforms here and you know, where I live locally and globally as well through mediums online and also through TV and radio and things like that, it's been fun.

[0:06:46.4] AVH: Cool, yeah, you're keeping busy.

[0:06:47.2] MW: I'm trying.

[0:06:50.4] AVH: I do have a lot of questions and they may not all be in the best order but I'm just going to go for it and see what happens. What made you decide to start the podcast which seemed to be kind of running parallel to a lot of the other things that you were doing and to do it with your partner at the time? What was kind of the thought process behind actually putting together a podcast of your own?

[0:07:11.8] MW: Well, that actually really came from him. He was very passionate and knowledgeable on how to run a podcast, he had one previously. So it was him kind of nudging me and saying, "We got to get this going, we both have so much knowledge, we have so much to share with the world, let's get this going." And I was like, "I don't fully understand what a podcast is but sounds good, let's do it."

We figured on the weekend because he lived, we were doing the long distance thing and we figured on the weekends, when we're together, we could start doing this and he knew all the tech stuff, how to get it going and so it began. That was about a year after I had opened up my physical location, my brick and mortar business. It was a really busy time but it started growing really quickly because of the dedication and consistency that we put into the podcast.

To answer your question, it came from him.

[0:07:58.8] AVH: Okay, what is the sort of general, it's called The Ultimate Health Podcast, right?

[0:08:04.0] MW: Yes, it is.

[0:08:05.6] AVH: What is the general kind of goal or hope or objective with the guest that you have on and the questions that you're asking? Because you know, of course, you get kind of an idea of what you're going to get into when you listen to it but 'ultimate health' is a pretty broad topic. What are the things that you tend to kind of cover and talk about that are really exciting on the podcast?

[0:08:24.6] MW: We've kept it broad for a reason because we wanted to encompass all things that fall under that category of health. Which covers everything from nutrition, fitness, mindset, even finances and wellbeing. A lot of our podcast and certainly in the early years was very much on nutrition and we were both vegetarian at the time, so a lot of our conversations were focused around that.

As we've evolved, we've opened up the conversations to all kinds of guests in the functional medicine space, in the paleo space, in the keto space as well as, as mentioned a lot of mindset and you know, things that aren't related to food at all. That's the goal is really allowing the listener to be able to derive their own conclusion, we don't have an angle, we don't push any one way of eating. It is almost like a little bit of a personal discovery of our own lives through the podcast because that's the conversations we're having but we don't ever say, well, this is the way you should eat or this is the way you should live or this is what you should think.

We never do that, we really allow people to draw their own conclusions. It is open ended but we find that it's been working really well for us because it covers so many different topics.

[0:09:29.0] AVH: Yeah, cool. Who is somebody you've had recently that was like really cool or exciting or you learn something really interesting from sort of in recent history on the podcast. Who is somebody that really stands out right now?

[0:09:42.9] MW: Recently, in terms of the mindset space, he's been on twice. Bruce Leptin who is amazing and he's all about the biology of belief. He's an incredible guest that we've had on a couple of times, he's one of my faves.

[0:09:54.8] AVH: Okay, cool, I have to check that one out. I ask all these questions because obviously as a podcast host, I love to chat with other people who do this for a living and kind of get an idea of your – how you try to create a niche in the space, right? Because it seems like there can be pros and cons to either keeping the topic broad and then there's pros and cons to having a message and a name that's more niche. Like for example, Paleo Magazine Radio, right?

You want to be able to reach the greatest number of people, you don't want to, as you said, kind of prescribe things to people and say this is how you have to eat and this is what you have to do, you want to keep it open ended in the spirit of sort of learning and teaching and sharing with people.

But I feel like it can be kind of overwhelming sometimes because the health and wellness industry has just kind of exploded, especially in the social media and podcasting world. How do you differentiate yourself especially online when you're trying to communicate and build a community? Like how do you authentically reach out to people in an environment that seems to be so over saturated these days?

[0:11:03.0] MW: In terms of our guests or in terms of our community?

[0:11:05.2] AVH: Just community, yeah.

[0:11:07.1] MW: From the very beginning, we made it a mission to make sure that we had some kind of touch points or several touch points to connect with our community. What's really worked for us is our Facebook group and that's a place where you find that people can come who are listening to our show, ask their questions, feel connected to us, feel connected to other listeners and feel like they have this platform in between the episodes.

That is one of our main focuses as well as Instagram. A big thing for us too is focus, it's not to have so many different platforms or social media platforms or outlets that are exhausting us and we're trying to keep up with posting and putting things in different places. For us, it's been our

Facebook group and Instagram through our stories and through our direct messages and through our posting and comment is one of our biggest ways of growing our community.

[0:11:59.2] AVH: Cool, okay. You mentioned that you had a brick and mortar space, is that for your cooking or like demos and stuff like that? What do you do with the physical space that you have?

[0:12:10.9] MW: I did have. I guess I kind of left that a little bit open ended. So I had a brick and mortar space for four years while I ran my cooking classes, that's when it grew out of my parent's home into the physical space and when the podcast started growing and I saw the possibilities of the online world and how much could be done there, I realized, I had to let go of the physical space as amazing as it was, as much of my heart and soul, I put into it, it was gorgeous, it was in midtown Toronto, it was everything I wanted and more. A dream space kitchen.

That comes at a cost, a big cost, of time, of money, of resources, of energy and I get to be manager as opposed to being the cooking class teacher that I dreamt of being. That's started wearing me down so I kind of flipped roles and as I started shifting my focus in terms of my philosophies, in terms of food because it was a plant based cooking school. I was like, I can't do this anymore, this is – unless I change my whole school to a paleo cooking school and do I really want to run this business anymore? When I realized that that was the case, I closed down the business which has been just over a year and a half now. Now, I'm fully online.

I don't have a physical space but yes, that's where I did do cooking class and demos.

[0:13:20.0] AVH: Got it, are you still in the sort of Toronto area?

[0:13:23.5] MW: Nearby. I was in Toronto, born and raised and now we're four hours west in the Windsor area which is right across from Detroit.

[0:13:29.6] AVH: Got it, okay. I mean, small world because I'm actually based most of the time in Ottawa. So we are pretty close to each other, we really should have done this in person, we'll have to do like part two in person.

[0:13:38.6] MW: Absolutely.

[0:13:39.3] AVH: Travel and hang out in real life because yeah, I kind of spend half my time in the States and half of the time in Ottawa and I know Toronto, I've been spending a little bit more time there and there's been some kind of cool – actually for Paleo Magazine, I just wrote this big feature about like paleo in Canada.

And I learned about so many companies and bloggers and even restaurants and things like that, that are opening up in all over Canada but Toronto was kind of a big hub and it's really impressive to see because a lot of times, you know, some of us in Canada can complain that we're a little bit behind the eight ball with trends and it takes a little bit longer for things to come to us, and products and resources and things like that.

It's pretty impressive to see, not even just paleo but sort of health, whole food based kind of community popping up all over the place in Canada and all the good work that people are doing. It's pretty cool.

[0:14:27.2] MW: Yeah, it is growing for sure but it's funny when you go to a place like New York or LA, you're like, we're still so behind.

[0:14:33.0] AVH: Exactly, yeah, well, I mean, when I'm not in Ottawa, I'm in New York so I feel like I get the best of both worlds, I get to kind of like go back and forth and get my – go to the actual farm to get my grass fed beef in Ottawa but then I get to go to New York and go to the cool restaurants that are selling fancy bone broths and stuff. I kind of, you know, I try to do a little bit of both.

You talk a lot about going from plant based vegetarian diet to something a little bit closer to paleo. Can you talk about that evolution and how that worked for you?

[0:15:02.3] MW: Yeah. Just to go the back stories that I, when I was younger, I always had this desire to be vegetarian, there was something very sexy about it to me. To me, it always seemed like my calling in life. It took me a few years to get my head around it and to actually become a

vegetarian which I did. I tested it once when I was in my teens and let it go and that's when red meat came out. Then when I was in my 20s, I decided to dedicate myself to being vegetarian again for health reasons, for ethical reasons, it just seemed like the right fit. I did it and I did it well and I was a very healthy vegetarian. I didn't eat the junk food, I didn't eat all carbs.

I was balanced and my mission was around nutrition and health so I always made sure that that's what I was educating about. For years, I thrived and like I knew that this was the way I was going to live, I thought that I was going to raise my children vegetarian and be pregnant vegetarian and prove everyone wrong. Until about five to six years into being a vegetarian. I started noticing some health shifts. From feeling really great and vibrant, I started noticing my digestion kind of went back off again even though years ago, I had that issue.

I was like, "What's going on, why is this happening?" My skin started getting irritated in random places. My energy just didn't feel as high, as vibrant as it was. I had been seeing a naturopath and different practitioners for many years and the blood results were coming back and I was getting a lot of information pointing to, you may want to consider changing your diet, you may want to think about adding more animal protein in and see what it's like and I couldn't get my head around it and I'm like, "What are you talking about? I'm so healthy, this is working for me and it has been for so long. There's no way it's just my diet, there's got to be something else."

I resisted it for about probably two and a half years before I started listening to people who are actually on my podcast and started reading books and blogs. Time and time again, we'd have guests on our show saying. Well, I was vegan or I was raw and I was doing this and then I started realizing XYZ and I was like, "I can relate to that. My goodness, they were able to make the shift, how did they do it?"

Just by hearing it over and over again, it allowed my mind to start to open up and not be so dogmatic and I slowly started to entertain the idea and I was like, "Okay, no one push me, mom, dad, Jesse, boyfriend, like leave me alone, let it come to me when it does." And then I started having these moments where it's like okay, I'm ready for eggs. Okay, I'm ready for fish and my body just like started to become in tune with the foods that I wanted and it took about three and a half years to slowly transition out of being vegetarian and I started toying with things because I didn't really, at the time, know what was going on with me.

I just knew something was off, I didn't have a clear cut diagnosis. I was like, I have candida or I've got some kind of parasite. I was just guessing and pulling out different foods like soy and the grains and the beans but I didn't have anything to call it. Then last May is when I officially got a diagnosis of having Hashimoto's thyroiditis which is an autoimmune condition and that's when kind of everything started to align and everything made sense. All the results that I'd been getting over the years from my naturopath, it was just clear in front of me that there was an issue here.

Was it all diet related? No, you know, nothing is but was it a big key player in what was happening to my body? For sure. I started to really understand that the beans and the grains and the soy was stripping away my gut and affecting how I was feeling and leading to an autoimmune condition and making all the changes that I already was before I had that diagnosis was the right move.

It kind of confirmed that I was on the right track and I have since continued that way and now I just switched out a lot of the beans and the grains and the soy for animal protein and I still keep my fats and I still keep my veg and I still have moderate fruit. The diet more or less is the same. I've done a couple of tweaks in terms of going on the AIP, autoimmune protocol to kind of further address the inflammation but more or less, yes I am in this kind of paleo-ish space and it's kind of a full 360 from where I was.

[0:19:15.1] AVH: Cool. When you were – you were saying you were younger and you liked the idea of being vegetarian and so you were playing with it and attempting it and doing it for a while. Was it more of a – was it a moral thing, an ethical thing, was it that that community just kind of appealed to you because it seemed vibrant and healthy or what was it that kind of drew you to it initially?

[0:19:35.1] MW: Yeah, I think it was all of the above. I did have a best friend growing up who's sister was vegetarian, there was something really like drawing in about how she lived her life and the fact that she was vegetarian made her seem so cool. And when I started learning about it and understanding about animals and the ethical component and it grew up with a dog, it all started to make sense to me, I'm like, "Why would I do this? I don't even like it that much."

And it just – it felt like the healthier way and as I started to become really fascinated with the body and health and nutrition. It was like okay, one plus one equals two. To me like it just makes sense like if you don't eat meat, you're going to be healthier, if you eat more vegetables and you eat whole grains and things that come from the earth.

I started kind of looking for information that confirmed those beliefs at the time but it was many years of just kind of being fascinated with the idea. It was a little bit of everything.

[0:20:23.1] AVH: I appreciate that you also talk about how it took years from deciding - from being vegetarian, deciding you wanted to incorporate meat and go into a more sort of paleo approach. That that takes time, that isn't something where you go from being a life long strict vegetarian to suddenly eating steak at every meal. That's not something that would be necessarily healthy or sustainable or even good for you as your body is trying to adjust to foods that it's not used to eating, right?

Can you talk a little bit about that process? Was there a moral and ethical kind of education that had to take place? You know, there are people like Diana Rogers and Sustainable Dish and lots of people out there that can teach you about how to eat meat ethically as crazy as that sounds to some people. It's absolutely something that exists and can be done and you can make better choices and all those things when it comes to incorporating meat in your diet.

But was that a process that you had to go through yourself and do kind of some soul searching? Or was it just like I need to do this for my health so let's figure out the healthiest way to do it?

[0:21:27.1] MW: It was a little bit of both again. Because I was a nutritionist, I was always very into understanding and learning all the different principles and even when I was educating about plant based nutrition. I was the first person to get up and say like if you choose dairy, please choose grass fed or organic. If you choose meat, please go for this, I wasn't just like, don't eat meat. I was not a crazy vegan.

I was totally open minded and very respectful of other people who were eating that way. Because I had that knowledge and understanding and also understanding the protein and the

breakdown in the body. I think to me, it just made sense when I started to consider bringing it back in how that was going to happen in a practical way.

And then in terms of the ethical, it was just – I wanted to kind of start at the lowest end of the totem pole because I think I thought that eggs and fish was going to be it. I was like okay, I'm going to be close to manual protein, it's going to be good for my health, my blood's going to start to change, what about eggs, fish and maybe a little bit of bone broth and that made sense.

As I started to incorporate those and I kind of let that marinade for two to four months or whatever time period I needed to let that soak in. I was ready for the next level. I started to suddenly crave chicken, I was like, I didn't think I was going to eat poultry again and I was like you know what I'm ready for it. I started with just chicken breasts, nope, there's no way I'm eating chicken thigh, ground chicken, ground turkey, no, that's gross and I'm not going there.

Give me a couple of months or a couple of people's homes to introduce me to it and say, you should try it and as I again learned, how much more nourishing it is than just the muscle meat. I started to open my mind up to it.

I think I started to really look at food as it came, sorry, I start to look at animal protein as I started to introduce it more as a supplement than just my goodness, I'm craving this, I was like, you know what? This is what my body needs, this is what's going to feel good inside and this is what's going to help rebuild my system. It kind of shifted.

[0:23:25.3] AVH: I think it's a good conversation to have that I think we're having more in the nutrition community, the paleo community keto, whatever that all of this diets, whether it's keto or paleo or whole foods or whole 30 or even vegetarian. Like there are different ways you can enact that in your life and I think that in an ideal world, a paleo diet, whether you want to call it that or not is plant based and it is largely plants and there's a misconception that to eat paleo, you have to eat like a caveman whatever that means. That means eating giant hunks of meat and that's it or whatever.

But you can be – I've talked to lots of people who are almost vegetarian in terms of the volume of vegetables that they're eating and then as you kind of eluded to, they're almost using protein,

high quality protein from fish and seafood and shellfish and red meat and things like that as a supplement to all these other healthy, whole fruits and vegetables and nuts and seeds and all of those things.

There's so many different ways that you can do it. It's about experimenting and figuring out how, what the kind of breakdown looks best for you and for your body and for your goals, right?

[0:24:33.0] MW: For sure. I totally agree with that. Majority of my meals every day is plant based, that's what my plate looks like and then I've got my protein on there as a portion or a component to it. It really depends on the day to how much I'm having.

[0:24:46.8] AVH: Yeah. When you decided to make this transition, were your family and friends supportive? Was the industry that you were working in supportive, what about your husband, you said he was vegetarian too, did he decide to make that switch with you or how did that work?

[0:25:01.2] MW: Yeah, I think my family, like my parents were definitely wanting something to change because they knew my health wasn't up to par so they were suggesting that something needed to change, they didn't know exactly what that was. My husband at the time, he was vegetarian but he was starting to think about incorporating meat. I think long before I was. He was almost waiting for me because he didn't want to be judged and I think a big part of the early part of relationship was based on the fact that we're both vegetarian and he thought that I chose him because he was vegetarian.

He was afraid to break that mold and I think he withheld himself from shifting his own dietary needs for me. We kind of shifted at the same time, he was very open and very excited for that to happen and so were my immediate friends. The one area that was a little bit grey and that was difficult for me was my community because here I was this plant based chef, author of *Plant Based Diet for Dummies*, running vegetarian cooking classes and I did not know how to come out with the news and it took me a long time.

It took me a very long time. I didn't like, if anyone ever came to my cooking classes and said, you know, are you still vegetarian or what do you eat? I was very open when I started to

incorporate the animal protein but I was never publicly showing it so it took me a while to start to post my first egg and my first chicken thigh. Then I was of course a little bit nervous for the response and I've heard stories about other people who have kind of come out of their breaking vegan and changing their ways and then response from the online community.

I was a little nervous and hesitant but I actually had a very positive response if anything. People who have been following me for many years and maybe became vegetarian because of me also are at the point in their lives where they were considering, incorporating animal protein and because I made that move and gave them that confidence, they were ready too as well. I got a lot of positive messages saying, "My goodness, thank you and now I have this support and this is great."

Of course I got a little bit lash back as well too, that's bound to happen when someone's following you for a certain way of living and eating and then they rip on you but overall, it was positive. That was the hard part of the shift.

[0:27:08.5] AVH: Yeah, it sounds, maybe it sounds silly to some people to think like you just decide to change your diet a little bit, what's the big deal but when you are putting yourself out there as a teacher or an authority and kind of any space or you know, you have any kind of following in your community, whatsoever and especially with food for whatever reason, we as humans tend to really kind of ascribe the way we eat to our identity and to, I don't know, our character a lot of the time and really part of our personality.

When that changes, it can be a little unsettling for us personally but also, it's like a new way for people to kind of attack you for making choices that maybe they don't agree with. It totally is a thing. Even on the paleo side, we still have - I joke about this all the time but we'll post recipes on Paleo Magazine social media and like, God forbid, there's a white potato in there, people lose their minds.

Because people can get very strict or very black or white about when they found something that works they think that it needs to be that way for everybody and I think that it is good that people like you are willing to just be open and transparent about how your diet and how your nutrition

and how that whole journey evolves and changes as you learn more and learn more about your body.

And I think it's good that they are putting that stuff out there because there are other people as you said that are maybe watching quietly that are going through the same thing and it's good to know that there can be communities out there that can talk about stuff like that.

[0:28:35.7] MW: Exactly and I feel like the more vulnerable and real you can get with your audience and yourself, the more you are going to connect and we see this time and time over again and it's true and I experienced that. Every time I make a shift, I am open about it or I will share the story around that and you just see the response. It is so positive and so healing, not only for me but for my listeners or followers.

[0:28:58.3] AVH: Yeah, absolutely. So can you talk a little bit like run us through what your paleo-ish diet typically looks like in a day, what kinds of foods you're eating a lot of, what your meals look like?

[0:29:10.8] MW: Well the morning time, depending on the season right now because it is cooler, I am going for more of an elixir, a fatty elixir for breakfast that will include coconut milk, often collagen, some kind of spice like turmeric or cinnamon, maybe some dandy blend. Sometimes a little bit of nut butter or cacao butter. Something really fatty, really filling, really nourishing and that might be paired with a paleo muffin. I actually just baked some today.

So something has got a bit of coconut flour or almond flour, I put some pumpkin in there, some blueberries, very low sugar. I don't even think I added sugar to this one at all. I just kept it straight up pumpkin is the base of it. So that is often my winter breakfast, in the summer time I am having a smoothie that is more to the green and fat side with a little bit of fruit. So I will use berries or strawberries, maybe a quarter of a banana or some zucchini and then put some protein and all kinds of fat in there.

For lunch it varies, usually a big salad with some kind of animal protein or it can be leftovers like fish and some sweet potatoes and some different kind of veggies, always lots of greens. That is what I gravitate towards. I am really not big on the nightshades or peppers or things like that. I

am always a big pile of greens whether it's cooked or fresh and root vegetables and dinner same thing. It could be a stir fry or tonight I am making tacos with some ground turkey and I love the siete wraps.

I am sure you've had them. So those are my fave, so I will just make tacos and pile some guac in there and you know the meals are so fun. I actually found that when I started eating more paleo and certainly when I went AIP which is so funny because AIP people often look at it is so limiting. So for those who don't know what it is, the autoimmune paleo protocol, it is a more extreme version of the paleo diet where you are eliminating chocolate, nut, seeds, eggs.

So it seems so limiting but it forced me to get so creative in the kitchen and because I love being in the kitchen already it was really fun for me to experiment using the things I was already using. So it wasn't so much about new ingredients, it was about manipulating them in different ways like using spaghetti squash and making a casserole out of it as opposed to just having it on the side with some pesto. And you know doing all kinds of unique things or using spaghetti squash for an oatmeal for breakfast.

So just finding new innovative ways to use the same base ingredients in really fun ways. So that's constantly what I am doing all the time just playing in the kitchen.

[0:31:46.4] AVH: Yeah, I mean I think that people who say that paleo or a healthy or a whole-foods diet is boring, they are really just are being lazy people. There is unlimited inspiration first of all out there on the internet, people like you who are making delicious recipes but if you think about spices and you think about all of the fruits and vegetables and meats and the combination and the healthy fats that you can add, I mean really it is just about finding the time and the will.

And the willingness to play and experiment but there is really no reason why even an AIP, even a super strict protocol can't still be enjoyable and fun and varied right? Because there is always still sort of more things you can eat and enjoy than things you can't and if you focus on the things you can't enjoy, I mean nobody wants to live their life that way. So focus on what you can have and then have fun with it.

[0:32:39.7] MW: And easy like I made a frittata for lunch today and it took two seconds – not really but it took 20 minutes or less and it was gorgeous and someone would look at them and be like, “Oh I don’t have time to make that for lunch.” Are you kidding? You chop up your veggies at the beginning of the week, you throw them at a pan with some avocado oil, you put some eggs in there, you put some turkey sausage and you got lunch and it’s gorgeous and it’s filling.

You throw some greens on top and you know that is the other thing too and that was always my motto in my cooking class business, was always simple and delicious. And that still carries through with what I do like even though the taco meal tonight is going to seem extravagant and so many different components, it’s again going to take me under 30 minutes.

[0:33:18.4] AVH: Yeah it’s like meal prepping and prioritizing, right? I mean I can’t begin to speak to how busy people who have kids or multiple kids or big families and crazier, more hectic jobs than I have how they find the time but I think that throughout history, we have seen our grandparents and their parents and throughout history people have spent a lot more time and energy on the act of making food and providing food and preparing and cooking food.

Because that was a part of their life that was important and that they enjoy and I think that like anything that’s important to you whether it is working out or spending time with your family or reading or whatever, it is about rearranging and prioritizing to find the time. So if you don’t, if you truly don’t think you have the time to make healthy delicious meals then maybe there needs to be a lifestyle audit where you figure some things out that you make the time because if it is important then you’re going to be able to find it.

So you talk about healing or discovering that you had an autoimmune disease and can you talk about that process of how you first were diagnosed because I think one of the things we talk about autoimmune issues in the podcast a lot but it seems like one of the biggest hurdles is first even getting a proper diagnosis and because so many of these issues can have so many layers and be so complex and they could maybe be something else or be caused by any number of things it can be really overwhelming and frustrating. Because people just can’t even really figure out what the actual diagnosis is.

So can you walk us through that process? And how you discovered what you were dealing with and then how you empowered yourself to heal.

[0:34:52.3] MW: Yeah and again I think my podcast for this because through my guests I have transformed my health. So we had Elle Russ on the podcast and she wrote – she’s amazing and because of her book and because of our episode together and she even took some time after the call, she inspired me to go deeper like I was getting blood results and I was constantly checking my thyroid but I wasn’t getting the right test and I wasn’t asking for them.

So literally right after we recorded with her, I called up my doctor in Toronto because that’s who was still my MD and I was like, “You know what? I have a requisition here that you have given me but I see that there are certain things that aren’t ticked off here that I would like ticked off. Is it possible to resend one with all of my antibodies and my reversed T3.” And I think I already had my TSH, T3 and T4 on there. I wanted my iron, there is a few other tests that I wanted.

She said no. She said I can do your iron, I can do a couple of them but I cannot put down your antibodies and she didn’t give me any good reason why she wouldn’t do it. So I am just asking her, “Please, you know this is my health and I want to dig a little bit deeper. I have a hunch that there’s some things going awry with my thyroid gland and can we check that?” So she resisted and luckily I was seeing a naturopath at this time who was able to authorize that I could get those tests done.

So I went about it in probably not the most legit way but I had the naturopath sign on and say here, those are the tests you want done, add it to the other one and when I got those tests done, low and behold, my antibodies are super high and that gave me the official diagnosis that I have Hashimoto’s. So when my doctor got those results back she wasn’t too happy so our relationship is now over but you know what? It was funny though because it was exactly what Elle had told me what she went through.

And I went through the exact same thing and the funny thing was that my doctor was always very open minded and always on my side for all my questions and all my holistic ways over the years. So I was really actually surprised that she denied me getting those tests done. So

because I am in Windsor and a new city, I started seeing a new doctor who is very open minded and helped me. Well, I didn't need too much of her information for the diagnosis.

But she was open minded enough to allow me to keep getting continuous tests and she knew enough about autoimmune disease in a holistic manner to give me some natural remedies which was amazing and very surprising for my MD and in addition to my MD. So through that and I also have a functional medicine team. So I do recommend people who are listening get a bunch of people on your side to help you and look at results together.

So I am also working with a functional medicine team who has since and over the last year really help me dig deep at this diagnosis and come at it from different angles and really go from the bottom up. You know when we know a lot about gut health and especially with the autoimmune condition and tracing back to my gut and a leaky gut we started there and over the last year, I have been really working towards healing it but it came down to blood results and demanding for your health.

You have to do that, you have to take charge and find ways to get around it if you can't do it through your doctor, go see another one or if you have to pay out of pocket, pay out of pocket.

[0:38:07.2] AVH: Yeah, I mean it makes sense especially with issues that are as complicated as this one as you said to have a community. Don't stick with one doctor that you've had forever and hope that they gave you the information you need like ask questions, talk to different people and list as much help as you can because more minds are better than less, right?

[0:38:26.0] MW: Exactly.

[0:38:27.0] AVH: What were some of the key things that have changed in the past year for you lifestyle wise, food wise that have helped you managed the Hashimoto's?

[0:38:34.5] MW: Well it was beautiful timing because at the same time just after I was diagnosed or actually just before I was diagnosed we made the move to Windsor. So my lifestyle is already starting to shift for the better. Got out of the busy city, I was right midtown Toronto which was hectic, pollution, noise, all of this stuff was happening to my system and it

was just getting to me. So when we made the move to a smaller city, it was exactly what I wanted. I wanted space.

I wanted quiet, I wanted more environment so I could go for walks in my own neighborhood and not just be standing in front of a bus or in front of a whole bunch of cars. So the lifestyle did a full change immediately which was perfect and then time. I had more time for self-care. I had more time in the morning to do the things I needed to do to start my day, whether it was waking up slowly and hydrating and sitting on a couch and just looking out a window or journaling and meditating.

I never did any of this stuff when I was living in Toronto or many years before when I was running a business. I just didn't have time to do that. So now I have been able to create this buffer room in my schedule that I can dedicate to myself. We've also purchased an infrared sauna which was a decision for my health and wellbeing.

[0:39:47.2] AVH: Such a great investment though right?

[0:39:48.5] MW: It is such a great investment, exactly. If you can do it and you have the means, the resources and the space for it, it's worth it and that's been a big part of my healing protocol as well. So there's been a lot of little upgrades that had a huge impact on my health and wellbeing and it is just continuing to escalate as I keep learning and discovering and trying new things.

[0:40:10.1] AVH: With the autoimmune issues is it something that you can actually cure or is it something that you just managed and can basically go into remission as long as your lifestyle is sorted out like is it something that you're always going to have to be aware of and sensitive to or how does that work?

[0:40:28.5] MW: I feel like there's two answers that I keep coming across and it's a little bit of both but I want to believe that I can put it into remission and completely have it out of my system. I believe people have done miraculous things with their health, why not? I certainly know that you can get it to a point when your antibodies are none existent. Does that mean that

they can be triggered again more easily than someone who doesn't have an autoimmune condition?

Probably, you know the trainers is already there and set up for that. So I can't answer that for sure. Again, there is so many resources and so many books I have been digging in on Hashimoto's and autoimmune conditions and I feel like people have different responses to that. I know that you can certainly get it to a place like right now a year later, I am in a completely different place in terms of my blood levels. It is not completely healed but I have dropped my antibodies.

Now I need to work on my T4 and T3. That is a whole other layer because even if you don't have Hashimoto's you can still have hypothyroidism which they do go hand in hand but someone can just have hypothyroidism and not have Hashimoto's. So it is an interesting situation to be in because I find it is very variable and the other thing that can happen too after talking to a recent guest in our show, here is another one for you that was a recent guest that was fascinating.

His name is Datis Kharrazian and you may have heard of him. He is an incredible functional medicine doctor who just knows everything and he has done a lot of work in the realm of the brain and thyroid health and one of the things that he talks about is that when you already have one autoimmune condition, you are more likely to develop many other ones. So there is a chance I could develop lupus or celiac or other disorders that could come about.

So I guess it sets up your system in a certain way and there are a lot of people who do have multiple autoimmune conditions at once and maybe that explains a lot for some people.

[0:42:21.8] AVH: Yeah, okay so for folks who want to start incorporating more AIP whole foods paleo meals or ingredients or whatever into their life, whether I have autoimmune issues or they just want to keep things super clean and just want to see how they feel and how they react – interviewed tons of people on the podcast that are pros in this areas and they do a lot of work with autoimmune protocols and stuff like that but if someone like yourself who does a lot of cooking.

And experimenting and working with recipes are there any ingredients or meals or combinations or anything that are underrated or people don't think about to use in their recipes or in their dishes that are really healthy and good that people might want to look at or explore?

[0:43:12.4] MW: I might be stating the obvious ones but coconut everything. I cannot emphasize that enough whether it is the coconut aminos, whether it is coconut oil, coconut butter, coconut flakes, everything coconut is just such a staple because you can go savory, you can go sweet with it and it is so versatile and it is so satisfying. So I find someone who is on the AIP protocol, coconut becomes like a lifeline because you need to feel satiated in certain ways.

Or you are craving a little bit sweet and you can't have chocolate. So you maybe mix some carob with some coconut oil. So there is just some ways around it. So I found coconut, coconut is the big one. So if you haven't explored all the different varieties of coconut, go for it. Root vegetables is one of my go-tos. I think just exploring all the different things you can do with root veggies from the squashes to sweet potato to purple potatoes and white sweet potatoes.

Just the versatility and the things that you can use them for whether it is a root vegetable based dish or whether you are using it in something like meatloaf or a burger or using it as a binder, there is so many different ways to play and manipulate root veggies and in muffins for sure or pancakes, all that kind of stuff. So I am big on the root veggies and of course I have to address greens but you know again, nothing new and novel here but I think people often forget about making them still a priority.

It is so easy for people and it is so funny. Again, having been someone who's been teaching cooking classes and teaching about nutrition for so many years, I can't see a plate without green on it. It's come to the point now where we go out with dinner with friends, everyone knows I am going to order a salad, everyone knows I am going to order a side of greens. It's just the meal is not complete and to me it still baffles me that people can eat a meal without something green on it.

So I encourage people to again explore beyond the broccoli and the spinach, get familiar with collard, use them as wraps, use sprouts and micro greens and put them into the blender or put

them into your cooked meal and just sprinkle them on top like find ways just to get the green nutrition in.

[0:45:19.8] AVH: There is so many green things that no matter how picky you are, you are going to find something you like, right? Just keep working on those vegetables, those green veggies until you find one that you like or find a preparation that you like, right?

[0:45:31.5] MW: Exactly.

[0:45:32.4] AVH: Yeah and also of course, we should talk about fermented foods because you actually wrote a book on this. So talk about some of your favorite fermented foods and how people should start incorporating that or can incorporate it and why it's important.

[0:45:45.7] MW: Yeah, for sure. You know a key player little did I know when I was writing *Fermenting for Dummies* this was years before I wrote *Plant Base Diet for Dummies*, little did I know that fermented foods will become such a big part of my life. I was interested in it back in the day when I went to culinary school and when I was writing the book. It was like more of a fascinating nutrition endeavor but now it is like a source of nutrition and healing.

So what fermented foods are doing is they are healing your gut and just by incorporating a small amount of them whether it is a sauerkraut or water kefir or a coconut yogurt whatever it might be, it is just inoculating your body and your gut with the beautiful bacteria. Now some people don't do well on a lot of fermented foods. I know of a few people who are on AIP or on different protocols and it just doesn't agree with them whether they have a histamine intolerance.

Or whether they are going through some other situations with their gut or they have SIBO and they just can't handle fermented foods. So you may have to work with that and see maybe you have to take it out for a period of time and bring them back in but overall for most people you should be able to at least bring in a little bit of fermented foods hopefully every day in liquid or edible form and I just find helping my gut and my immune system has just been such an essential addition in my diet.

[0:47:01.9] AVH: And there are so many ways as you said that you can add fermented foods. I mean people not that I am advocating that this is exactly how you eat your fermented foods like dark chocolate is fermented and wine is fermented. You know there is great kombucha that isn't super high sugar. There are a lot of ways again, we keep going back to this but it is about experimenting and playing with things and adding a like a little bit of sauerkraut maybe to your salad and see how that goes.

There are a lot of ways that you can incorporate it. You don't have to do it the way the person next to you is doing it. So for your book, what's it fermented food –

[0:47:36.0] MW: *Fermenting for Dummies*. So the goal too is that there is so many fermented products on the market and anyone who is listening right now can go to the nearest health food store and buy so many fermented products. Now you have to do your due diligence. Some of them believe it or not have preservatives in them. Some of them have actually been past dries which totally doesn't make any sense. So you've got to watch out for that for sauerkraut and they are expensive because they're trendy right now and it takes people a long time to make them.

The people who are putting them out there so whether you are buying out of a farmer's market or you are buying it in health food store that can add up. So if you are able to take some of this one and make them at home, something like a sauerkraut or a water kefir is so easy to make at home and it is so cheap and it yields so much. You buy one head of cabbage, you use a little bit of sea salt, you do your think, you just shred your cabbage, quote it with sea salt.

Break it down, pound it down, put it in a jar, maybe you get two jars out of it and you've got this beautiful food for like a dollar, two dollars or three dollars, you know? It's amazing what you can do at home. So the whole goal with that book, both the dummies books, was of course just breaking things down and showing people the easy steps to taking on at home.

[0:48:47.5] AVH: Are those books - are you able to get those digitally or electronically or download them or are they hard cover only or hard copy I should say?

[0:48:56.7] MW: Anywhere yeah, through Amazon and you can get it as a Kindle. You can get it at your nearest bookstore whether it's Indigo or Barnes and Noble, any which way you want it comes.

[0:49:06.8] AVH: Cool, awesome. Well we're starting to come to the end here. We could talk forever but that's I'm sure as a podcast host, you know how that goes. We've only got so much time in the day but is there anything else that you're working on or anything that is coming up or that you are experimenting with or doing or projects? Anything coming up that you are excited about that you could share with us?

[0:49:25.3] MW: Well because of my Hashimoto's diagnosis, my colleague and I at the same time we're going through the same thing which was interesting, we decided to develop a program out of it especially as we started to learn all of these tips and tricks and strategies. Something that we wish we had. So right now, we are actually in the middle of something called Healing and Dealing with Hashimoto's which is something that we are going to be doing two times a year.

And it is four weeks of live classes, where we are educating people and taking people through eating plans and protocols and which gut test to get and what supplements to take and just providing a support system. So that has been a new exciting project that has been new this year and something that I do have available that people can get anytime is a grain free e-book with delicious recipes and treats as well as elixirs.

So how beverages some of my favorite like turmeric and chocolate elixirs. So that is available. I can always send you the link or it is on my website, so whatever is best.

[0:50:21.6] AVH: Yeah, great. We'll make sure we put those links in the shownotes and remind our listeners too where they can go online to connect with you, follow you, find out what you're doing, check out your books, all that good stuff.

[0:50:32.6] MW: Everything is at Marni Wasserman so on Instagram or you can go to marniwasserman.com and everything is there.

[0:50:41.7] AVH: Awesome. Well Marni thank you so much for taking the time and as you said at the beginning of this interview, there is no one right way to do things and I don't think it is anyone's place to tell anyone how they should be eating but I got to say, I am glad that you walked a little bit over to the paleo-ish side of things and that it is helping you with your health and that you are able to share this journey with people.

And teach people and hopefully help people who are having some of the same struggles that you had and yeah, I just really appreciate doing the work that you are doing and sharing it with us.

[0:51:14.9] MW: Thanks for letting me share the message.

[0:51:16.3] AVH: All right, so next time we will connect in Ontario somewhere, we'll do a part two.

[0:51:20.3] MW: Would love that, thank you.

[0:51:21.7] AVH: All right, thanks Marni.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:51:27.8] AVH: All right everyone, thanks for being here. Next week, I am chatting with humanOS founder and sleep expert, sleep expert so important I keep getting these guys on the podcast because goodness knows I need the help, anyway his name is Dan Pardi. He has among other accomplishments developed a holistic health program and app that can take all of your current fitness trackers and work with them while applying this higher level approach to learning about health.

Tracking your progress in a really intelligent way and it allows you to apply this mini courses. So if you are trying to get healthier, you are trying to lose weight or trying to get better sleep but you are also interested in paleo or keto or fasting or the Mediterranean diet, maybe you are a shift worker and do you have a certain criteria there so this program can apply all of these criteria and these specific learning courses to you. So it's super cool. It is really interesting.

I've been playing around for a little bit so I will keep you updated from how that is all going for me but we also talk about sleep a lot because that's a big area of expertise and we talk about drugs. A very specific drug actually called GHB that also relates to sleep. It is a very interesting conversation. So I hope that you tune in next week. I hope that you're subscribed to Paleo Magazine Radio on iTunes or wherever you listen so that you don't miss it.

And I hope that if you like it and you enjoy, you take the time to leave a nice review and a rating on iTunes because it means a lot to me and it helps me keep my job for 2019. You wouldn't want me to be jobless would you? Just a little bit of pressure there. Leave me a review that will be awesome and if you fill out the form in the shownotes of the podcast as well as leave a review, I get all of those forms and you will be entered to win a cookbook of your choice.

Yeah, so free stuff, leave me a nice review. Make both of our days great news. All right, thanks again to our show sponsor, the Metabolic Health Summit taking place in LA, January 2019. Head to metabolicealthsummit.com to learn more about those four day keto and metabolic therapy event and all the latest research, you can go rub elbows with a bunch of smart people and you can get 20% off your tickets if you use the code "paleomhs19".

So that website again is metabolicealthsummit.com. Join me next week and I hope you have an awesome day.

[OUTRO]

[0:53:40.8] AV: The intro music for Paleo Magazine Radio is a song called Stronger performed by Alter Ego and I hope you love it.

[END]