

## Episode 119 Transcription

Say goodbye to the food police and hello to peace. Welcome to the Love, Food Podcast, hosted by dietitian and food behavior expert Julie Duffy Dillon. This authentically engineered series is in the form of a love letter welcoming you to reconnect with food. Now pour a cup of coffee, or a margarita, and let's begin.

*Transition/Music overlay*

Hi and welcome to Episode 119 of the Love, Food podcast. I'm Julie Duffy Dillon, registered dietitian and partner on your food peace journey. I'm so glad you're here. Thank you for connecting today.

I am wondering where you are on your food peace journey today. How are things going? I'm also wondering if you've experienced the place where you can really honestly say, "I'm done with dieting. I know diet culture is fucked up. It is not about me and it is *all* about them." Ugh, hooray, right? That just takes off a tremendous like load and shame cloak, as I always like to call it puts it where it needs to belong and if you're in that space, sometimes people come across nutrition recommendations and they wonder what to do with it and they wonder like, is it threatening? Is it something that's going to push be back to restriction? Well, it's a really common part of the food peace journey. How to take in nutrition recommendations maybe for like a health condition or something else (*laughs*). And what to do with it. There is a way to kind of meld those two together. The way that I've experienced it is helping those affected by Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome.

If you're new to the podcast, this PCOS thing is something I work a lot with because people affected by PCOS, which it's *at least* 1 in 10 women, um they have had this like relationship with food that has been tortuous. They are pushed to diet constantly and um focus on their weight all the time in order just to get decent healthcare. If you have PCOS, I know you're nodding along right now.

Well, I have a letter from someone today who's experiencing PCOS, but that's not really the most important part of it. But, is also wondering, as she's making peace with food and totally feels done with diet culture, how to take in sort of what we call gentle nutrition recommendations because it sounds restrictive no matter what angle she kind of goes in with it. And, she's wanting to experiment with her food choices.

Before we get to this episode's letter, and I also have a special guest I forgot to mention. Her name is Vincci Tsui and I think you're going to totally appreciate her insight. She has such important nuggets of wisdom that you're going to take away from listening to this episode. But, before we get to this episode's letter, a word from our sponsor:

This episode of the Love, Food podcast is brought to you by my PCOS and Food Peace course. It is open for enrollment and I would love to see you there. Are you done with dieting *and* also wanting to promote health without going down, *again*, that diet rabbit hole? Well, I would love to connect with you. I have been working with people affected by PCOS for about 15 years now. And I have this 12 step system that I take people through that helps promote healing their relationship with food, move away from diet culture and then finding ways to promote health within nutrition recommendations that I find to be helpful and not harmful to recovery or for those of you who are not wanting to diet. Which, honestly diets don't work so nobody needs to be dieting. They don't help anybody or at least most people because there's always that one person out of a million that gets some kind of good thing from it, but honestly for most of us, diets don't work. And so, people with PCOS, I don't want you to diet. I think it's super harmful and long-term just sets up um weight cycling and like low self-concept cause you may be thinking you're doing it wrong and you're not doing it wrong. So, if you want to find details about the course, you just go to [pcosandfoodpeace.com](http://pcosandfoodpeace.com). If you enjoy this episode of the Love, Food podcast, I would appreciate a rating, review, subscribing or sharing the episode. Doing any of these acts of kindness helps the show grow. It helps more people find the podcast and, I don't know about you, but I want everyone to feel at home in their own skin today. So, thank you in advance for any of those um acts of kindness again. I think they're super um important to help other people find the show and I love reading them so thank you. Alright, enough of all that. Let's get to this episode's letter.

### *Transition*

Dear Food,

Growing up, I don't remember thinking about you in terms of having a relationship with you. Mom cooked, and we ate. She was extremely frugal and knew how to stretch her "never enough" dollars to get the most out of it and she also is a great cook. So, while there wasn't ever real goodies growing up, there was enough of the basics to go around. And there were quite a few of us to.

At 17, I was diagnosed with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome. At the time, my weight was perfectly normal, even according to the BMI. Yet, I was told time and again to watch my diet, lose weight, etc and this is how my weight cycling began. I quickly became obsessed with you and exercise and over a period of a few years, I was completely immersed in diet culture. Then, I met my boyfriend (now my husband) and I realized that either I can spend time thinking about my relationships, or I can diet. Dieting was taking up all my headspace, but because I was so interested in him, I consciously needed to put it on the back burner. The feeling of freedom was heady and I was able to enjoy every minute of life when I didn't need to watch everything I ate. Looking back, that was when I hit "diet rock bottom". I gained a few pounds quickly but I noticed that the weight gain tapered off after a few pounds. Fast forward a few years, and I realized that past the initial weight gain, my weight has remained stable. When I told all this to

my sister, she said that I was describing what she'd heard about intuitive eating. When I read the book, I was amazed, because I'd been doing it all along and, obviously, it is truly "intuitive". It is now five years later and I can honestly say I've put diets behind me for good. I don't watch you, I'm comfortable in my own skin and with my PCOS and I realize that I have a great relationship with you. Yet, I still have a hard time putting nutrition first in a way that doesn't feel restrictive. I just finished Traci Mann's amazing book, *Secrets from the Eating Lab* and I loved the research she described. Yet, I still balked at some of her very gentle suggestions regarding healthy food choices. Please don't tell me that I haven't been giving myself enough permission to eat, because I know that I'm ready to embrace eating healthier at this point. And I definitely still would eat less healthy versions of you if I want to. I have chocolate or cookies every morning with my coffee which I thoroughly enjoy and view as a form of self-care. Sometimes I start eating lots of chocolate, and then I try to slow down and feel the satisfaction factor, which helps me stop when I'm full. So, I think I'm in a place right now to try incorporating more nutrition. Is it possible that growing up with very few treats, even if there was enough actual food, might've had this effect on how I use treats today? Or I'm thinking that perhaps I've waited too long to work on gentle nutrition consciously, and it's become a habit reject the food police out of hand, which might not be serving me so well anymore. I've sort of outgrown eating what's in front of me only for the sake of "not dieting". I'm also curious about your tips for managing PCOS and how following those might also make them seem like food rules.

Looking forward to your response.

Love,  
PCO cyster

#### *Transition*

Hey there letter writer. Thanks for your note. I really appreciate this part of the food peace conversation. I think it's where, as a dietitian, I find myself exploring tremendously with folks. You bring up a really important question in your note about how it's really tough putting nutrition first in a way that doesn't feel restrictive. And there's so much to that. And there's so much individualism with that like everyone's going to be different in how they can process and hear certain information and here's another point: Nutrition is not an exact science. So, we have to keep that in mind whenever we're reading nutrition science, nutrition research. It's such a fluid type of concept and very individual.

Lucky for us, we are going to call Vincci Tsui. She's a dietitian that I've gotten to know over social media over the last few years and I think she's going to have some insight just for you. Let's go ahead and give her a call.

#### *Transition*

Vincci: Hello?

Julie: Hi Vincci! It's Julie Duffy Dillon. How are you?

V: Hi Julie! I'm doing well. How are you?

J: I'm great! I'm so glad to talk with you and I first learned about your work by listening to Nutrition Matters podcast with Paige Smathers when you were interviewed with another person. I can't remember her name now. Talking about um that documentary. Was it What--, I just forget the name now. What What-What the health? —no.

V: What the Health. Yeah J: (*laughs*). Oh I was right.

V: I was with um my colleague Kathleen up in Yellowknife. Her last name is escaping me right now. We're both being so terrible but—(*laughs*) J: (*laughs*).

J: Well, it's a great episode and it's when I first learned about your work, um in case you haven't heard that episode with Paige Smather's podcast, it's a really great one but um so thank you for um chatting with us and helping us with this letter. Did you get a chance to—to read it yet?

V: Yes I did!

J: Awesome!

V: Thanks for sharing it with me.

J: Mmhm. Yeah! I have a feeling that you're going to have some insight so um when you read it, what was your general impression of what this person is experiencing?

V: Well, I think she is, or this letter writer, I don't know why I just assumed it was *she* umm but I find that the la-letter writer is very um self-aware, I think and it sounds like this person has um done a lot of the intuitive eating work on their on so I feel like they're almost kind of getting to the point in that intuitive eating journey where they're ready to add in um that gentle nutrition piece *but* they're kind of getting that voice like, "Oh my God! Is gentle nutrition diet mentality?" and trying to find that balance between yeah, eating intuitively and listening to their internal wisdom but also kind of incorporating some of the external health, gentle nutrition as well.

J: Mmmhm. So, I feel like this is a really common spot for people to get stuck. You know? And I, when I was reading that letter, I felt like that nudge that was making it feel uncomfortable was probably something that was important to attend to. You know, there was something about it that was probably a good instinct to acknowledge here (*laughs*). Umm, well, what would you—how would you describe gentle nutrition? I feel like that's important to even discuss.

V: Yeah, yeah. Well, I think the way that I tend to describe gentle nutrition to *my* clients who kind of get stuck at this point is it's about intention, so I think um when nutrition is coming from like a diet mentality, food police sort of place, it's very much about rules and about following

those rules and um whereas when it's kind of coming more from a gentle nutrition, intuitive eating sort of approach, it's less rules, more just what makes me feel good um you know but also considering like the science around like what makes other people feel good and so um it's kind of like am I eating with the intention to follow this rule which would be, yes slipping back to more of a diet mentality versus am I eating this way because it make me feel good and I guess it happens to be what makes other people good, you know, based on some of the research that's out there so I think intention is a big piece when I'm describing gentle nutrition.

J: Oh, I love that. I never thought about using the word intention and um you know, thinking about like the rigidity versus doing it for purpose of hey, this makes my body feel energized. It reminds me of like nutrition science—I feel like so many people think of it as an exact science and it, it really isn't. It's so fluid and individual. And, we have some research that we can kind of gather data points and make averages and things like that, but I feel like gentle nutrition, like you said, it's more about what works for you and taking in the science to see if there's options for you to feel um more how you want to feel and um being able to discard things when they don't fit you. And one of the gentle nutrition type of concepts that I work a lot with with PCOS, like this letter writer said, um that they're experiencing PCOS and one of the things I say often is people with PCOS probably just need more protein. You know, it's not like an exact thing. Certainly there's people who talk about yanking out other macronutrients and I'm like, no no. No, no, no. (*laughs*). Just-- I feel like they probably just need more and I, that-that wording is super intentional like that word probably is in there because everyone's different. It may not work for you or it may not work for you now but it may later. Umm, and, it's something that research is kinda pointing us to-towards but no, your own experience is so much more important than the science behind it so why not experiment? And see what happens and I—that's the other part of gentle nutrition I always think is important too which I feel like that intentionality points to, it's an experiment, you know, just see what happens and um, you know I think about this letter writer and like the judgement that comes with even the thought of gentle nutrition which I feel like is an important kind of point. As I say that, I'm forgetting that I want to ask you about something. So, the letter writer mentions the book by Traci Mann. *Secrets from the Eating Lab*, I think V: Yes J: and you know, that's a book that I used to always recommend and it's—I have to acknowledge my a-holiness as I (*laughs*)—because I read like maybe half of it and I was like, “Wow this is awesome. It really goes through the science of like why dieting is harmful. Like, how it promotes inflammation and weight cycling is so—causes the things that we always blame on higher weight, you know, it's such a great resource,” but then like the end, which I didn't get to for forever, talking about like, this is how you eliminate things or this is how you suppress your weight and I'm like, “What? What? Wait!” (*laughs*) this is going against everything, so I like want to remove that from the Food Peace syllabus for that reason because it's not—it wasn't, I mean, there's a place for gentle nutrition and *Intuitive Eating*—that book has a whole chapter on it and um that felt different to me than Traci Mann's book. I don't know if you read *Secrets from*

*the Eating Lab*, I'm totally throwing it at you spontaneously but that's kind of my experience with that book and I know the letter writer mentioned it too.

V: Well, unfortunately, I haven't read the book yet but I definitely have heard the same criticisms that you have had and I think for a lot of books, really, that um that an author sort of brings people into kind of this non-diet, food peace approach, like I think there are books out there that um people find that yeah there are lots of great points but then there's often, I mean partly because of the culture that we live in, um that there is that like diety point or that oh if you did this, you would lose weight or um you know if you tried this then it would work. Like I think it's hard to escape that kind of wording um you know, given the culture that we live in so I definitely heard those criticisms of *Secrets from the Eating Lab* but also other books and other authors as well and I think that just goes back to this whole idea of intuition, right? And trusting our intuition to figure out, oh ok which parts of these are helpful and which parts of these can we, you know maybe reinterpret (*laughs*) or just like not take um you know word for word, like taking it with a grain of salt.

J: Yeah. A lot of sifting. I feel like that's what we have to do. A lot of sifting through books and resources. Well, so considering all of this, what would you recommend as uh like the first few steps for this person, to incorporate maybe gentle nutrition or whatever you're thinking as good next step for the letter writer.

V: Mmhm, yeah. Well I would be really curious about um sort of the points that she did balk at in Traci Mann's book. Like what are some of these gentle su—what she considers gentle suggestions that she's still kind of struggling to embrace and sort of talking about them and yeah, kind of like you said, experimenting with them, because I think that's what makes nutrition so—as a science, so confusing for people because you're right that um the research gives us a lot of direction in terms of what probably works for most people but at the end of the day, um as a clinician, when you're working one on one with a client, that person just cares about what works for them (*laughs*) so-so um yeah, encouraging that experimentation. Like, it's almost like the research gives us parameters um to set this research so set some boundaries so we're not having to experiment with everything under the sun, but realizing your reaction different from what comes out of that research and then yeah, sort of just talking through, ok what are those things that you want to implement and where is that—and exploring where you're desire is coming from, like are you wanting to incorporate um, I'm just going to use say more vegetables for example, because you're kind of feeling like, yeah I like the feeling of eating vegetables, I definitely feel um energized or whatever it might be when you eat vegetables *or* are you eating vegetables because you know, someone told you or you know that there “good for you.” Right? So-so I think it's kind of um going through yeah, what are the specifics you're unsure about or what are the things you're thinking about changing with your eating habits and-and can we experiment with them and how those things feel um in your body and in your life.

J: Mmm, yeah. So, with all that being said, something I know other people have told me is almost that like they're feeling both at the same time of like, using your vegetables example, I want to eat more vegetables because wow, it just feels more energizing when it's a part of maybe dinner or something and then at the same time, it's like the eating disorder voice or diet culture sort of voice is like tapping on their shoulder like hey, yeah you're coming back (*laughs*) you know and um have you ever had both at the same time before?

V: Yeah, definitely and I think too um because a lot of people are reaching—reaching out to a lot of these groups for support and people are in um say like Facebook groups, for example. They're at different points of their journey, so they might be saying something like oh, like vegetables do feel good for me or whatever it might be and but then like someone else—so, it could be an internal voice, it could be an external voice, like oh my gosh, that's a really diety thing to say like I can't believe you said that. So I definitely see how um how there could be like external voices too that are saying like that's an eating disordered thing um when really they're like kinda at that point where they're like no, I can incorporate these without it being a rule with the intentionality of it being um self-care.

J: Yeah, yeah like you said, what it comes down to is what's your initial intention? Like the tapes in our head can be wired to think of vegetables or wired to think whatever as eating disorder or diet culture or you know, in reality, why do they get to own all the vegetables? Like, that's not fair (*laughs*). You know, why, why does like diet culture get to own movement? No, they don't get to own it. We get to claim all the foods and all the movements you know? (*laughs*) And what it comes down to is that um there may be times where the food will feel—yeah, that's what my body is really wanting and craving and that's like before and after it feels pleasurable, it feels great *and* there may be a part of like the old tapes in the head that may be like you know this sounds like it could be um our way back and you can—I feel like we can unlearn that part but we have to acknowledge that they're both there, you know? And that's what I love about the intention. Like getting back to no, like talking back to it. Like no, my intention right now is to not follow some dumb rule that's not rooted in anything that has to do with me. I'm just doing what works for me. The thing that's cool about that, with any experiment, is you can change it around, you can stop, you can—you know? (*laughs*). That's what I was thinking about that, so um I'm wondering um Vincci, if you have anything that you would like to add to the Food Peace Syllabus and if you're new to the podcast, the Food Peace Syllabus is our collection of books and resources like podcasts or blogposts and movies, anything under the sun that further helps to cultivate a healthy relationship with food and body and bring about more peace with that relationship. Do you have anything you want to add to it?

V: Yeah, well I would say like for this letter writer specifically, I'm thinking of a blog post that I wrote um a few months ago that talks about meal planning and intuitive eating um because when people think of the words meal plan, like it's almost kind of like, oh my gosh, that's diet culture right there that um this idea that you have to plan and like eat according to what you planed out

and so what that blog post is all about is it talks about intention, again, in meal planning and how um meal planning can still be a part of intuitive eating depending on what your intention is, so um so say I write about my intention being you know, yeah being able to get home and just start dinner right away and saving time that way um you know being able to use up what's in my fridge and it's not about you know trying to lose weight or follow rules or diet at all. Um so I think that's one thing that's really interesting to people sometimes is that I think even though a lot of the behaviors might be the same as like—or similar to what would be considered dieting um when the intention is different that's what makes all of the difference and sometimes it is kind of doing that mindset work um, that's the bigger difference than you know *what* people are actually eating. And then I would say that for people in general um who are maybe a bit earlier on their own intuitive eating, food peace journey, um I have a free e-book on my website that's called *Stop the Food Fight, Start Making Food Peace*. Um and it's just seven steps to helping people get started right away on their intuitive eating journey so seven practical steps.

J: Awesome! And we will put links to all of that in the show notes and you can get to it by you know by just clicking on the podcast right now or going to my website [juliedillonrd.com/lovefood119](http://juliedillonrd.com/lovefood119). And all the links will be in there, so we'll make it easy peasy. So, if someone wants to find out more about you, is there an easy way to connect with your work?

V: Yeah, so um the quickest way is probably my website: [vinccitsui.com](http://vinccitsui.com) and the fun thing about my name is it's not spelled how it's pronounced (*laughs*) so it's v-i-n-c-c-i-t-s-u-i.com. I'm also really active on social media. You can find me on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at VincciRD.

J: Oh great! Ok. I'll put those in there as well. Thank you so much for your time and expertise. I think you gave us some really important insight and nuggets to kind of go towards for next step for this really common part of the food peace journey. So thanks so much.

V: Absolutely! And thanks so much, Julie for having me on your podcast.

J: Take care!

So there you have it. Letter writer, I hope Vincci and I's conversation gave you some next steps along your food peace journey. I see that Food has written back, but until we get to that, I want to make sure you reconnect. I want to know how things are going. I want to know if setting your intention and exploring Vincci's tools—if that was helpful.

This episode of a Love, Food podcast was brought to you by my PCOS and Food Peace course. Enrollment is open and you can get to all the details by going to [pcosandfoodpeace.com](http://pcosandfoodpeace.com). If you enjoyed this episode of the Love, Food podcast, I would love it if you could leave rating, a review, share the episode, or subscribe. Doing any of these acts of kindness helps the show grow

and reach more people because everyone deserves to feel more at home in the skin they're in today. Alright, I need to get to Food's letter. But, until next time, take care.

*Transition/Music Overlay*

Dear PCO Cyster,

We are thrilled to see you experiencing more food and body freedom. It's been a bumpy road and diets and body hate took up so much head space over the years. We are glad the important things in life, like your relationships having more meaning and power. Looking ahead, we see you pausing. We sense your fear. We think it's important to sort through this fear and name your intentions. Diet culture does not own fruits and vegetables. It doesn't own variety. Stay connected to what energizes you and name when diet culture tries to woo you. Calling it out will keep it from seducing you again and keep you connected to your joy.

Love,

Food

*Transition*

Thank you for listening. I am Julie Duffy Dillon and this is the Love, Food podcast. Do you want access to more food peace? Jump on over to my website and join my-mail list. There, I share exclusive content that I don't share anywhere else. Get access to these tips and strategies by going to [juliedillonrd.com/signup](http://juliedillonrd.com/signup), and I look forward to seeing you here next week for another episode of the Love, Food podcast. Take care.