



Episode 236: Facts vs Myths about Blue Zones & Ways to Increase Longevity

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This podcast is brought to you by SteadyMD, and I have a story to tell you about them! I love this concierge medicine company because they have an amazing team of doctors and they match you with one who shares your values and health ideals. This way, your doctor knows your full medical history and is available any time you need him or her for calls, video chat or text questions. With their new family plan, you can ask questions about your kids, and this is where the story comes in. Last year, I can just now talk about this as it was so traumatic, there was an outbreak of impetigo in our neighborhood, possibly from a water slide all of the kids were on. In case you don't know, impetigo is a type of staph infection on the skin and it was bad. There were 30 kids with skin infections all at once and was a pitiful thing to witness. All of my neighbors were taking their kids to urgent care or local doctors, and they were getting all kinds of opinions of the best type of treatment ranged from multiple courses of oral antibiotics, to topical creams to both. I haven't found a good doctor here and was so grateful to have my SteadyMD doctor literally in my pocket. While everyone else was sitting in doctor's offices for multiple hours for multiple visits to see a doc, I was able to video chat mine, share pics of my kids and get his advice instantly. He knew my preference is to avoid oral antibiotics whenever possible and he worked with me on a plan to tackle impetigo naturally and to only use topical treatments and save oral antibiotics as a last ditch effort, which we did not have to use. He was on call for the several weeks of the healing process to make sure there were no complications and called me every day and he gave me peace of mind during a stressful situation. I've used them so many other times for little things that require peace of mind and even for bigger "does this need stitches" type questions. Check them out at [steadyMD.com/wellnessmama](http://steadyMD.com/wellnessmama).

This episode is sponsored by Crunchy Betty products. Here's a secret- while I have a post about making my own deodorant, I haven't actually don't it in a couple of years because I found Crunchy Betty Kokomo cream deodorant and realized it works just as well, doesn't cause irritation and is made by a small family business that I love to support. It smells like the tropics and one small jar of this deodorant lasts for months so it reduces packaging. ! I love that it uses minimal (recyclable) packaging and because it lasts so long, there's virtually no waste! For me, it completely stops any odor and keeps me fresh all day, even on heavy workout days! So many natural deodorants cause irritation and this one doesn't. Check it out on at [etsy.com/shop/crunchybetty](http://etsy.com/shop/crunchybetty) or grab it on Amazon at [crunchybetty.com/wellnessmama](http://crunchybetty.com/wellnessmama).

Katie: Hello, and welcome to the "Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from [wellnessmama.com](http://wellnessmama.com), and today's episode is going to be fascinating because we're going to delve into, among a lot of other things, blue zones, which I get a lot of questions about from you guys. And I am here with Caroline Angel, who is the author of a book called, "50 Shades of Grain." It's an international bestseller, it's fascinating. And as a speaker and a writer and an international traveler and researcher, she has gotten to study the nutrition, lifestyle and habits of cultures all around the world. Specifically in collaboration with Professor Michelle Poulin, she has studied blue zones, which are places where people live to be over 100 years of age and still exist with vitality, which is the important part. And so, through these studies, she's working to bring ancient wisdom to the modern world, and we're going to delve into all of that today. So, Caroline, welcome and thanks for being here.

Caroline: Oh, thank you so much, Katie. Thanks for having me. I'm so excited to share the information with your audience.

Katie: Likewise, I can't wait to jump in. And I always love to ask at the beginning, what brought you into this world of study? I know that for a lot of us, I always joke for myself that I got into this world trying to fix myself. And I'm curious if you...what was your motivation for getting into the health and wellness world?

Caroline: You know, it's interesting. I was raised pretty healthfully from my parents, but when I came to America, I noticed the kind of foods that my peers were eating were very different than what I was used to. I was used to homemade meals. And when I went to school, everyone was buying things from the outside. And I remember being made fun of very much so. It was really difficult because I was fresh off the boat and I was already looking different and I didn't speak the language at all, and here I am eating something different. And I just knew, and I had severe acne when I was young and it took me a while to realize that, oh my gosh, you know, diet has a lot to do with it. And when I consumed foods that were authentic and traditionally-made and going back to the basics, amazingly how it cleared up. It just, you know, helped me connect the dots. So I don't know, ever since then I just have been gently advocating just real food and lifestyles that promote health, that are traditionally-based or based on traditional values I should say.

Katie: Yeah, that makes total sense. And I know that you've also...you and I had a great conversation about blue zones, because I think they're something that is a big buzzword right now and a lot of people are interested in. But I also feel like there's some, like, maybe misconceptions about what actually happens in blue zones. And you've been to some. So I would love to hear kind of an overview of what you have learned from your travel and your research in this area.

Caroline: Oh my God, yes. You know, I wanna delve into that and let's just get right into it. I traveled around the world studying different cultures, religions and diets just because I just love traveling and learning from them. And I think observational research is more powerful, you know, than data research, although that has a lot of value as well. But you know, there's a lot of research out there that's based on data, but when you go out there and observe it, it's maybe quite different because the variables that are not able to be tested in the lab, right? And so that's why I love doing observational research.

A few years ago, a couple of things, defining moments that helped me understand things a lot more deeply and help my sisters find their balance naturally, effectively and practically without chasing the elusive mushroom all the way to Tibet or chasing after one doctor to another. As a family, we had been on a gluten-free diet for years and it served us really, really well. My growing boys were done though. They were done with cardboard-tasting, gluten free breads. I knew if I didn't find a tasty, healthy, real bread solution, I'd lose my kids to refined food industry, because they warned me. They said, "Hey, mom, here's your warning. If you don't find this bread that tastes good, we don't care if it's good for us, if it doesn't taste good, we're going to go to Subway." And I'm freaking out, I'm like, "No." So I prayed for the answer.

Now, at the same time, which was about a few years ago, my research took me to Sardinia, one of the blue zones in the world. This is where centenarians, clusters of them live over 100 years of age with longevity and vitality. This is where I met serendipitously...you know, I tried my best to meet the researcher who identifies and validates blue zones, and I had no luck. And I tried everything until I got on land. And the two days that I was in the same village, Villagrande, that houses most centenarians on the island of Sardinia, he happens to be there as well. I'm telling you, all the moons and stars lined up for that to happen.

Long story short, a month before while I was still in the United States, I went to a holistic GYN to check my body. I hadn't done that for years and years. She ran some hormone tests and recommended a benign

bioidentical hormone that was compounded specifically for my hormone levels. Reluctantly, I accepted, but I requested it to be in minute amount. So, imagine this, it's the second day using this cream, I'm in Sardinia, thousands of miles away from home, 5:00 a.m., I wake up to this sharp, excruciating pain followed by profuse sweating. The pain and sweating kept intensifying. It was beyond any child-birthing pain I had ever experienced. I mean, you know how that goes, right? I thought I was dying.

After two terrifying hours, as sudden as the onset, the sweating and pain stopped and it became totally obvious to me that it was adverse reaction to this benign bioidentical hormone. And I knew I had to get my balance back. I had no other choice but to go back to the drawing board and do things more naturally. Not knowing much about hormones at that time because it's such a complicated topic, I went into hyper research mode. I realized that hormones are a complicated topic even amongst practitioners. The cost combined with a long-term safety and effectiveness of these medications and treatments, it's important that it reinforced the importance of considering alternatives for lifestyle changes. So I just realized the answers were in my toolbox and, you know, I went and practiced what I was preaching.

One of the things, as I'm sure you will appreciate, is just getting enough sleep because I was burning the midnight oil and I was just thinking that I could be Superwoman. So that really helped, just getting my sleep and a couple of other little dietary changes that got me back on track. I wasn't that much off track, just maybe little symptoms of hot flashes here and there, which I knew they were a prelude to other things. So I'm glad I was able to stop that. But to answer your question, while I was in Sardinia, I decided to ask questions from women who demonstrate longevity. And I asked them, I said...I asked them about perimenopause and menopause, and you know what their answer was, Katie?

Katie: No, what they'd say?

Caroline: They're like, they have no idea what that is. They have never heard that word before. So I described to them symptoms. And this is, by the way, through a translator because I don't speak Sardinian and they didn't speak English. And so I'm describing to them all the typical symptoms of perimenopausal and menopausal symptoms. And they said, "Oh, do you mean like when it's really hot out, you know, and during the summer?" They're describing me summer month, season, you know, feeling the heat during summer months, seasons. I said, "No, that's not the same thing." So it's just they don't have those symptoms, and it's not because of their diet particularly, it's not one thing that they do. It's a combination of the lifestyle choices that they have. It's a diet, it's a movement, spiritual practices and beliefs, community, sense of connection, social life, being connected to nature. But the most impactful of their lifestyle is their diet. And this is not according to me. This is also traveling around the world, studying different cultures, and asking other researchers who do observational research.

Katie: That's super fascinating. Super fascinating. So what did you find in relation to diet specifically? Because I know Sardinia for their food and wines. But what was their diet actually like? I've heard there's so many theories about that. So what do they actually eat?

Caroline: Oh my gosh, that is such a great question, I can't tell you. So it's a combination of eating a balanced diet that is locally sourced and processed, using the freshest and non-adulterated ingredients possible. Do they follow a diet? No, they don't follow a diet. They're not obsessed like our society with unimportant subjects as that. People who demonstrate longevity eat to their biochemical individuality. As long as it is locally sourced and processed using traditional methods, seriously, I'm telling you, anything goes. One diet does not fit all. There were two things that surprised me the most. Contrary to popular belief, centenarians who demonstrate longevity aren't vegetarian or vegan or follow a gluten-free diet or any other kind of diet. They consume a lot of meat and grain foods like pastries, pastas, and breads. I was shocked. They consume foods that some experts deemed dangerous, such as large amounts of saturated fat, large amounts of animal, believe it or not, healthy amounts of carbohydrates and limited amount of real sugar.

I've noticed that centenarians don't care about gluten in their grains, and it's not because they don't care. In fact, they care so much about what they put in their body, that it shows in their longevity. And the way they care, it's just different the way we do. All they do is really, really simple. It's not as complicated as ours. They just follow traditional processing. They just follow traditional wisdom. That's it. And of course, again, I have to say one thing, one thing that they're eating is not panacea for everything. It's a combination of the things that they do.

Katie: That makes sense. I know I've read a lot of things, like they are all vegetarian, which you kind of dispelled that. Or they all, you know, eat only, like, olives, they eat certain foods. So it sounds like they have a much more balanced approach than we do, which makes total sense. But can you speak to that for just a moment? Like, did you see any of these centenarian villages or tribes that were plant-based?

Caroline: Yeah. So you've got Sardinia and you've got Costa Rica, you've got Okinawa, you've got the Greek island, all of them consume meat, some sort of meat. So that was something that I have gone in having read on paper that they were mostly vegetarian, and that is what I was expecting. And also, in my mind, I was expecting...I was just thinking, "Of course they're not gonna consume a lot of, you know, pastas like Italian's do, even though they're part of...Sardinia is part of Italy." So with those two things, I went in, but I was open-minded and open-hearted to not be attached to any agenda, because I don't have any diet dogma. I'm not attached to any agenda. I'm just an observer and I just wanna shine the light on the truth and what works best for my sisters and their biochemical individuality.

So when I set foot on the first blue zone, and I've been to three of the blue zones, when I set foot on the blue zone in Sardinia, the first thing I noticed was, you know, it was, first of all, by the ocean, which the centenarians live more in the mountainous area. So that's why I thought, okay, it's because they're living by the ocean, they're consuming a lot of fish and, you know, they're consuming a lot of meat and there's very little vegetables. When I found where they were and I met the researcher, and then when I was observing them when I went to their homes and they invited me to their homes, I was just like...literally, my jaw fell to the floor when I observed them, how much meat there was. It's like the opposite of what we're told. Mostly it's meat, very little is vegetable.

Of course, again, the vegetables that they consume is locally sourced, locally produced. They probably produce it and it's full of nutrients. They don't use any chemicals and GMOs. And you know, the soil is full of

minerals, so little goes a long way. It's the same with the meat, right? But at the same time, doesn't mean all of them ate that way. It depends on the time of their lives. It depends of their age. As they got older, you know, their diet changed. So they changed the way that they ate depending on their needs. Right? So we went visiting, Professor Michelle Poulin and I, went visiting a home where one of the centenarians was living with his wife, and he was consuming wine and lots of bread. And I'm like, he can't live off of this, but obviously he was. And the wife was consuming meat stew.

So within the same household, they're consuming two different things. Does that mean that one should go out there and just all they need to do is consume wine and bread? No, it just works for him. But the one thing that I noticed that they do is that they adhere to traditional practices. One of them was they had me taste this nasty-tasting...and they knew it would be too. And I have Michelle captured a footage of it. They had me taste a... Okay, let me see if I get this right. Fermented inner lining of goat stomach, a lactating something, stomach of a goat. And I thought, "Oh, you know, I consume a lot of fermented stuff, so you know, I should be fine. I have acquired a taste for it." Oh my God, no. This was nasty. But he said that he's been consuming that every day since he was a child, a little, like a half a teaspoon. I'm sure he knows that that keeps his bacteria in check, the gut bacteria. So they do take care of the bacteria from the time that they were children in the way that they consume things and the following the traditions. And they are very much, very, very, very much into routine, doing the same thing over and over and over again. Getting up in the morning at the same time, you know, that's another thing. Consuming coffee and pastry. I'm like, "What? Are you kidding me?"

But one of the things that I was shocked was, in the village I was staying with the centenarians, which I like to do, I like to stay and immerse myself in the culture, I stayed with the younger generation who had kids my kids' age, which was really wonderful because my kids got along with their kids and everybody was happy. I noticed that the kind of pastries that they were serving during breakfast was very different than the kind of pastries that when we visited centenarian homes. The pastries that they were serving the newer generation were packaged. And even though I was able to read the ingredients, the ingredients were fresh and they were from Italy, not too far from the island, and they were using really wholesome ingredients. Nonetheless, they were processed. Versus the older generation had to, they were like sticklers to consuming foods that were processed in the local villages, using local honey. Isn't that incredible?

Katie: Yeah. That's super fascinating.

Caroline: That has been one of the key points where I keep thinking and that's how I got to bring the ancient wisdom into the modern world because we don't have...we don't live in one of the blue zones and we can't necessarily, it's not practical for us to move into the blue zone or practice all that they do because we don't have that built-in village, right?

Katie: Yeah, exactly. I'm also curious, as a follow up, because there's right now a movement against alcohol. And personally, I think there's a big difference in types of alcohol, and some can be safe while others aren't. But I'm curious if you found that they drank wine in these blue zones? Because the perception right now in a lot of the health world is that all alcohol is bad. And I know that some of the healthiest wines in the world come from blue zones. So I would love to know your observations about that.

Caroline: Okay. I have a lot to speak about that, and I'll just share with you my observation. And later on we'll discuss some...a book that it's changed my life tremendously, how it's put a different perspective...not different perspective. How it's really shined the perspective on that particularly. So, alcohol, that's a good question because are we able to consume alcohol? Are we...our body where we are able to consume alcohol? I don't know. Like, it's not like I don't consume alcohol. I do, but I don't think our bodies were meant. Now, the centenarians do consume wine. It's Cannonau wine that they do consume, and it's rich with all the nutrients and you know, it's some say that it's the secret to their longevity.

Now, as one of my boys' teachers told me, I have twin boys, and they were in first grade, I had gone to progress report. And one of them was not doing so great, the other one was doing great. And the teacher was telling me, she said, "Well, you know, they're both goofing around in the classroom," because my boys are goofballs, you know. They'd rather have fun than be studious, which is fine. And she says, "They're very, like...they want to entertain other people, other friends. They are goofing around." And I said, "Well, how is one of them getting good grades and the other one not?" And she said something that I'll never forget. She says, "One of them couldn't afford to goof around. The other one can't, right?" So that goes with all of us. They can afford to goof around, they can afford to drink wine. That's my take on it, okay? Now, I'm not judging, and I'm not saying we should never drink wine and we should be purists. I think we should live life. There should be all good things in moderation, not all things in moderation, because...we've got arsenic, right? That's not good in moderation in any amount, right? So all good things in moderation. So I hope that answers your question.

Katie: It does. And I'm also curious about their movement, because I haven't been to the blue zones. But just having been to Europe, I know that typically people in Europe move a lot more. They walk a lot of places, they're just constantly moving. So I'm curious if this was the case in blue zones and what you noticed about their movement patterns.

Caroline: Yeah, absolutely. That is so true. And in fact, they live in mountainous areas. Most of these places, they live in places where, you know, the streets are narrow, a car access is a little bit harder. And so, walking is actually more practical. And another surprising thing that I found out is, when I was living or staying in the village observing just people in general, you know, even the older people, 70s and 80s, they would be going to their garden, their farm, shepherding and whatnot. And when they came back from...that would be considered hard work. But they're moving throughout the day. They don't have gyms. I don't... Do they have gyms? I don't even know. I don't even think they have a gym. They don't need a gym. Maybe in the outskirts they would, in the more modernized cities. But in the villages, there's no gyms.

And what I found was these older people, when they would come back home, that's how we bumped into an elderly couple who invited us to their place and they shared with us so much. I mean, through Google translator and my boys speaking a little bit of...you know, there's a little bit of a likeness to Spanish. They would understand some of the words. They were able to share so much with us. But we bumped into them while we were hiking all the way up the mountain. And they were just going like hiking like goats, and we tried to help them come down a steep mountain and he looked at us saying, "No, no, no. Do you need help? I don't need help." And they have no joint problems. They not only work hard on the farm, or shepherding, they come back home and they want to continue this movement. So that's very typical for them to constantly keep

moving. But when they do not move, like when they're sitting and consuming food or spending time with family, they're in a present moment. So it's very methodical, their movement.

Katie: That makes sense. What was their mindset like? Did you notice any differences in their mindset versus our mindset and stress levels in the modern world?

Caroline: Yeah. Well, it's interesting you say that. My observation was the younger generation, there's a lot more connection to the internet and they have more media devices, TVs and all that. The older generation, not so much. And I saw, you know, the stresses, like the modern lifestyle stresses in the modern family, especially the ones that we were staying with and they were experiencing the same thing and they were running a business, not like their ancestors did. So they're running bed and breakfast, and a pizzeria. But it was just more like a business, and it was very stressful. Whereas the older generation, they just seem to be happy in general. Does that mean they didn't have any stresses? No. They have a lot of stresses in life. They have, you know, their loved one is dying. They have, you know, relationship issues. They have stressors of, you know, how the weather's going to be, whether they're going to be able to produce food. They have to make sure they procure food for their family. You know, there's the stressors, but the way they handle it, they have a community, they have each other, they get together, they connect, they count on each other for support. That is, I think, the biggest thing. Versus feeling like they're connected superficially on the internet, having a gazillion friends on the internet, but really not and just really feeling alone. You know what I mean?

Katie: That makes complete sense. And I've long said, I think community is one of the biggest factors and the biggest factor that we're missing in the modern world. And it's something that I've really prioritized in my own life. But I'm glad to hear that that's something that they still have. On that note, what do you think, if you had to guess...I know there's so many theories. But if you had to guess, what do you think are some of the biggest factors in why these communities have a higher percentage of people who can live longer?

Caroline: Again, it's just the combination of things. Again, they have each other. It's a combination of diet, the movement, their spirituality and their belief. Most of them are very religious, like they...Catholicism and Christianity. But they have, like, spirit...they have belief. Now, that does not mean you can't get that through being spiritual, you know. That's a form of religion, but it's a different kind of religion. You know, it's not dogmatic. And again, just community and connection, knowing they have each other. And at the end of a hard day, being able to connect with friends and connect around food and conversation, oh my gosh, that's, like, beautiful. It just...watching that was so relaxing. You know, it just brings down the stress levels and helps calm down. You know, I just felt like it's almost like if you can feel your adrenals, I felt like my adrenals were like calm, just observing them. You know?

Katie: I can only imagine. That sounds amazing. And I'm curious if there is anything, or what are the things that you took back to your own life after that experience, that you've now implemented after seeing this completely different lifestyle?

Caroline: Yes. So many things. First of all, I was able to bring back tasty bread and that was life-giving. So my boys were really, really happy about that. Yay. So that's what actually inspired me to write the book, "50

Shades of Grain," because I wanted to also...it's not about deprivation. We don't need to deprive ourselves. We just need to learn from people around the world and their wisdom and bring it back into the modern context of the world, modern world. And that's what I do best, right? So in the book, I share all the things why we need to avoid the modern grains and the modern processing of grains. And I talk about how to connect to ancient grains and ancient processing of the grains and what difference that makes. It's literally between life-sucking and life-giving. It's a gigantic difference. One sucks the life out of you, one gives you life.

Like, for instance, I don't know if you know this, but there's two ingredients that are added to modern grains that are detrimental to the hormones particularly. There's so many other things. I mean, that's why it's called "50 Shades of Grain." It's not so black and white, and there's so many different grays in there, right? And there's so many different things that contribute for bread to be sucking the life out of you. One of them is bromide. Bromide is a conditioner that helps strengthen and soften dough, also reduces the staleness of the bread, but it also sucks the iodine out of your body. And our thyroid, as a woman, I'm sure you...I mean, you know, you've gone through that path, you understand how important thyroids are and how it helps produce hormones. And how without iodine, our body doesn't have enough hormones, and our hairs dries out, becomes brittle, falls out, skin loses its shine, elasticity, joint starts feeling pain, you start losing energy, libido, mood, and on and on and on, right? So that's one of the things.

The other thing is alloxan and bleaching agents. Commercial bakers use this to save time and money because they're able to turn the flour a white quickly and efficiently, and it gives the grain finer texture, softer texture, better volume and brighter. So it's better for...it makes more money for the bakers, the commercial bakers I should say. And this agent, the bleaching agent, alloxan, makes your blood sugar spike up and down, and it is literally used and injected in lab animals to make them diabetic so that diabetic drugs can be tested on them. And elevated insulin forces a woman's body to skyrocket her testosterone levels, and testosterone gets converted to, I can't even pronounce it. I can spell it, but I can't pronounce it. It's short D-H-T, which is a hormone. And the more testosterone a woman has, the more it gets converted to DHT. And DHT is a hormone that destroys your hair follicle. And 99% of hair loss triggers are hormone-related. And women who have elevated testosterone, they also have weight issues, especially around the midsection, mood swings, irregular menstrual cycle, anxiety and depression and on and on. So that's one of the biggest things that I took away from my research in Sardinia.

Katie: That's fascinating. So, to go a little deeper on that, I think...you know, grains have had an interesting last couple of decades. There was definitely the completely anti-grain movement, and the gluten-free movement, and certainly I know a lot of people do notice a big difference in their health when they get rid of gluten or specific grains, which makes sense in what you're talking about. But I'd love if you could go a little deeper on kind of what are some examples maybe of ancient grains versus modern grains and how do people find these in their daily life? Because it seems like we're getting this a little bit research in the idea that not all carbs are bad, which I agree with, and that there maybe are some healthy grains. But can you give us some more detail on how to identify healthy versus not healthy?

Caroline: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. So, you know, the devil is always in the details, as I say. Choosing to eat or not to eat grains isn't so black and white. There's so many shades of gray to consider when choosing which one to avoid and which ones may be safe and healthy to consume. And so, during my travels, studying different cultures, diets and religions, I had an epiphany, especially around food and diets. And the

information in the book is eye-opening to some and controversial to others, right? And I'm loving how... I just am so appreciative how open-minded some people can be. For instance, Dr. Tom O'Bryan, who's an advocate for gluten sensitivity and all gluten-free things. And him and I met a few months ago, and he understands and respects my work. It's not about poo-pooing all over, you know. He's saying that there's no such thing as gluten sensitivity.

Celiac disease does exist. Gluten sensitivity does exist. So we have to be very careful about that. You know, and even if you do consume the right kind of breads, you know, you still have to be careful because you may be super sensitive to many things. I'm taking care of a few clients right now who are like super, super sensitive stomach. And we had to cut out all sorts of grains, wheat, dairy, and all this stuff. Until we reset the gut, then we can't introduce these things that could cause inflammation. But when the gut is ready and is set properly, then introducing life-giving grains and the way they were processed, it's so beneficial.

So some of the things that modern grains have that are nutritionless and toxic to the body are genetic modification and excess hybridization. I mean, hybridization has been done for thousands of years. But when it's done so excessively, and definitely genetic modification, our body does not recognize it. And there's the excess use of chemicals, pesticides and herbicides in the soil, on the plant, in storage units. And then there is mold-inducing conditions. For instance, nobody really talks about storing these grains. What are they stored in? They're stored in silos. Silos are these metal, big containers, and they're in the elements. And if the sun is hitting them... Now, grains are fragile molecules. So what happened? What means is that heat and speed break that molecule up and make it rancid. When it's rancid, it's no good to eat, right? So what is in storage-containing units, it goes through rancidity and perpetuates the mold condition. So fungicides are sprayed on them to control that.

And then when it goes through processing of the grain, once it's picked... First of all, perhaps glyphosate may be sprayed on there to make the harvesting more uniform, to save, you know, the company's money. And so, that's an additional assault, right? And then when it comes to processing, nutrients are removed. And then they add back synthetic preservatives and vitamins, which is like isolated form. Again, our body does not recognize that. And then the high speed and high heat milling process degrades the grain even more because it's heat and speed. So, the bleaching just gives the color more aesthetic look to the color of the flour. And again, that's so degrading to the hormones, to the body.

So, modern grains are so many things, there's so many 50 shades of gray in there that adds up, and our body...it's just, like, bombarding our body, assaulting our body. With the ancient grain, it's quite different. It's grown, not genetically modified. It's heirloom seeds, organic, if it's organic. It's grown in, hopefully, soil. If it's fertilized, using traditional processing methods like manure. And so, the full minerals are added right back in, not just isolated three minerals as fertilizer. And then, how it's harvested and how it is processed, using stone grinding process and using the whole grain and keeping it intact, not using bleach, not using anything.

And of course, if it's fermented, that gets rid of phytochemicals and it breaks up the gluten and it makes it more palatable for the body to digest. It's just really, really incredible. I mean, there's a purpose and reason. There's a method to the madness to use traditional processing. And the problem is, in the modern world, you know, we're all living...you know, trying to speed things up. But you know, the key is, the secret is going back

to slowing down in everything. Just the more you slow down... You know how we talked about, before we got on the call, how taking one day off can have such an impact on our productivity, right? Just slowing down is so important. Does that help?

Katie: That does. And I think you're right. I think there's such a difference in that movement away from these highly-refined grains that we know affect our body. Like, both they raise our insulin levels pretty drastically and they're largely devoid of nutrients, like you said, the newer ones. As far as traditional preparations, did you notice lots of things like sprouting the grains or sourdough or these more intensive but, like, nutrient-dense methods of creating bread or pastries or products?

Caroline: Yes, of course. Tons. Like, the pastries, I can't speak to that really because I don't know how much you can ferment, you know, the flour to make pastries. But definitely with the bread, sprouted grains, fermented, those are all helpful and those were the processes that are used by ancient cultures and centenarians currently living and using those traditional processes. Definitely. So, the sourdough, like, for instance, the sourdough removes phytic acid and enzyme inhibitors, while predigesting the food, increasing nutrient density. Sprouting, soaking and genuine leavening, sourdough leavening, predigest grains, allowing the nutrients to be more easily assimilated and metabolized. Predigesting the food increases the nutrient density. And made the old fashioned way with hours of fermentation and naturally-occurring yeast in the air aid in the digestion process by allowing the bacteria to break down the carbohydrates and the gluten in the bread. So, just allowing time to do its thing, just not speeding at the process, just helps us in the long run because it does the work for us. It gets rid of things that we don't need and it prepares the food so that we can assimilate it the way we need it.

Katie: That makes sense. And I would guess in the same way, a lot of their preparation, even of animal products, was more in the traditional method of like they would use the whole animal. They would probably have bones in. They weren't just eating like ground beef and chicken breasts all the time. They probably had a much more diversity in their diet. Did you see that across the board other than just with grains?

Caroline: Yeah, I did, kind of. What was surprising to me, I didn't see the diversity that I was expecting in like they would eat different kinds of meat. Like, in Sardinia, their main meat was pork. And I usually don't eat pork, not because I'm religious, it's for religious purposes, but because I know, you know, what pork eat and what pork eats, whatever, and how they digest the food and how quickly...and they're nondiscriminatory animals, right? And how quickly what they eat, because they're nondiscriminatory, it goes from their stomach, because they have a very simple stomach, within minutes it goes into the blood stream, into their tissues, into their muscles. So you are who you eat. And most pigs who are raised not using traditional... Like, I don't see a lot of them out here in the United States, even if it's free roaming. They're still not in the wild.

In Sardinia, they're out in the wild. Literally, they're in a forest. Like, when we were driving about, we see these skinny pigs, they're not fat pigs. They're skinny pigs and they're foraging through the forest, they have tons of space. They're not just like in a confined space, stewing in their own stuff and digging stuff and by accident consuming things that have pathogens and viruses and parasites that end up going into our bodies. So, the Sardinians consume a lot of pork, and they don't have any factory farms. It's all wild. And I didn't see any chickens there. But they cure their own pork.

This couple that we went to their house, the older couple, they took us to their basement and they showed us a row of pork leg that they were curing, and that's what they consume and they trade off with other people who perhaps, you know, raise chickens. They don't eat the chickens for their meat necessarily, it's for the eggs. And they trade with one another. It's really beautiful.

Katie: Yeah. And that goes back to the community aspect, which is so awesome.

This podcast is brought to you by SteadyMD, and I have a story to tell you about them! I love this concierge medicine company because they have an amazing team of doctors and they match you with one who shares your values and health ideals. This way, your doctor knows your full medical history and is available any time you need him or her for calls, video chat or text questions. With their new family plan, you can ask questions about your kids, and this is where the story comes in. Last year, I can just now talk about this as it was so traumatic, there was an outbreak of impetigo in our neighborhood, possibly from a water slide all of the kids were on. In case you don't know, impetigo is a type of staph infection on the skin and it was bad. There were 30 kids with skin infections all at once and was a pitiful thing to witness. All of my neighbors were taking their kids to urgent care or local doctors, and they were getting all kinds of opinions of the best type of treatment ranged from multiple courses of oral antibiotics, to topical creams to both. I haven't found a good doctor here and was so grateful to have my SteadyMD doctor literally in my pocket. While everyone else was sitting in doctor's offices for multiple hours for multiple visits to see a doc, I was able to video chat mine, share pics of my kids and get his advice instantly. He knew my preference is to avoid oral antibiotics whenever possible and he worked with me on a plan to tackle impetigo naturally and to only use topical treatments and save oral antibiotics as a last ditch effort, which we did not have to use. He was on call for the several weeks of the healing process to make sure there were no complications and called me every day and he gave me peace of mind during a stressful situation. I've used them so many other times for little things that require peace of mind and even for bigger "does this need stitches" type questions. Check them out at [steadyMD.com/wellnessmama](https://steadyMD.com/wellnessmama).

This episode is sponsored by Crunchy Betty products. Here's a secret- while I have a post about making my own deodorant, I haven't actually don't it in a couple of years because I found Crunchy Betty Kokomo cream deodorant and realized it works just as well, doesn't cause irritation and is made by a small family business that I love to support. It smells like the tropics and one small jar of this deodorant lasts for months so it reduces packaging. ! I love that it uses minimal (recyclable) packaging and because it lasts so long, there's virtually no waste! For me, it completely stops any odor and keeps me fresh all day, even on heavy workout days! So many natural deodorants cause irritation and this one doesn't. Check it out on at [etsy.com/shop/crunchybetty](https://etsy.com/shop/crunchybetty) or grab it on Amazon at [crunchybetty.com/wellnessmama](https://crunchybetty.com/wellnessmama).

Katie: As we start to get near the end of our time, there's a few questions that I love to ask and I can't wait to hear your answers to. And the first is, is there a book or books that have had a major influence on your life, and why?

Caroline: Yes, totally. So "Conversation with God" is a sequence of books written by Neil Donald Walsh, and that has had a huge impact. It is a spiritual wisdom. It is not religious, it doesn't promote one religion over

another. It is not data from other sources. It resonates with me because I feel it touching my heart. Some of the things it helped me remember, because we all have this, we just have forgotten, is what is the sponsoring thoughts? We have two emotions: fear and love. Right? And everything else is a derivative. And what do we get ruled by? Fear or love? I choose to live in a place of love because that way I can't...it's never led me, you know, the wrong path. And letting go of well-meaning but misinformed tutors. That was another thing that I learned from that, because there's a lot of people there who talk about, you know, this is the way it should be and there's this one way. If you don't do it this way, you know, there's a repercussion.

So, letting go of well-meaning but misinformed tutors. Seek not who you are but who you want to be. So every day we are creating ourselves, recreating. So this just, for me and the sisters I help, just forget about who you were and the pain you're in. Just think about what you wanna create. And with the help of the right guide who understands you, your biochemical individuality, and understands your needs and supports you and keeps you accountable and creates that community for you, you can do it. So that's the book that resonates deeply with me.

Katie: I love that. And that's a new one. I'll have to add it to my own list. Next, what are a few things that people don't know or understand about your area of research and expertise?

Caroline: So let me just say one thing. Do get the audible version of that book. I highly recommend that. It's very, very powerful. I usually like reading books, but to get the audible version of that book.

Katie: All right, good to know.

Caroline: Okay, one is, one diet does not fit all. It's not gluten, and gluten alone does not fix all. Spelt, kamut and other related ancient grains contain gluten, but some people who claim to be gluten sensitive can eat them without having digestive problems. Why? It's not the gluten alone. It's a combination of all the things done to modern and other industrial grains. The food industry, never one to miss a good opportunity, is milking the gluten-free craze by producing products that are gluten-free, but not necessarily free of other inflammatory ingredients or processes. As I'm quoted frequently by my kids when they go grab food product that is gluten-free and the list of ingredients are non-nourishing, I say, "Just because it's gluten-free doesn't mean it's crap-free."

And also, the third thing is we are biochemically individual, and as we are observing centenarians who demonstrate longevity, everyone has their biochemical individuality and it changes from time to time. And as a woman whose hormones changes depending on a cycle, you know, our needs by chemical individuality change as well, not only month to month, but week to week, day to day, moment by moment. So we have to be cognizant of that.

Katie: Yeah, for sure. I think there's a lot more to take into account with women's hormones. That's something I've talked about quite a bit. And I loved so much your point about one diet not fitting everyone, because I think that's something I've noticed, and I've in the last year or so, trended much more towards personalization

and variation over any kind of dogma at all because I've realized, like I think a lot of us have, I found what works for me, which is great. And I think there's something, like you said, we can learn from everything. So there's things that I can share that will help other people, but at the same time I think maybe like, what if we're all right? What if we all found the things that work for us, and rather than adopting a dogma or an exact blueprint from someone else, then we'd rather should just learn from kind of their core message and take the pieces that fit our own bio-individuality versus, you know, just what exactly did you do so that I can try to be exactly like you? Because I get questions sometimes, like, what exactly do you eat in a day? Or what supplements do you take every day? And my answer now is just, "The ones that are right for me, but they're not gonna be necessarily the right ones for you." So I love that you're shedding light on that.

Caroline: Exactly. And that's what I do. You know, I help women. I have built a...because I have done many live workshops and helped many women find their balance or lifestyle, not just diet, I created a happy woman program to make it accessible to women just like us, maneuvering through this transition in our life gracefully and vibrantly. And I created the program for women who are done experiencing anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, PMS, hot flashes, sleeplessness, forgetfulness, low libido. Oh my God, like, how could you live with that? You know? Less vitality, joint pain and hair loss. And I created this program for women who are ready to take charge of their health and honor their needs without confusion, deprivation, starvation, feeling guilty or chasing after one doctor or another, taking pills, creams, hoping for a panacea. You know? I help women balance their...help busy women find the hormone balance so that they can get back to their sexy selves, so they can start feeling happy, thinking clearly, managing weight effortlessly, having sex and libido back, you know, shiny hair and skin, feeling and looking their best.

So I love helping people and I guide them through a tested and proven process that is customized, meeting each woman's unique needs and lifestyle goals. Because I did this a long time ago through an online program, but I realized really quickly, oh my God, it's like everyone is so unique. There's so many different intricacies with every woman. So I've got to personalize. So I combined the best of both worlds.

Katie: That's awesome. And on that note, if you had only one piece of advice that you could spread far and wide and get to thousands and thousands of people, what would it be and why?

Caroline: Be conscious about what you eat. You are what you eat. More than ever, we have access to resources that we didn't have before. With that comes the challenge of sifting through misinformation and disinformation, lies. Finding the truth takes time and lots of effort. Thank goodness for people like you, Katie, seriously, who just share and share information, making it easier for people to find their truth, right? It isn't the lack of wanting to be healthy that most people fall changing their lifestyle. Support and accountability is key. We all need guidance, right? Just like we're learning from centenarians and people around the world who are happy, connection and, you know, getting support is super important. We are not meant to be lone wolves. Find the guide or guides that understands your biochemical individuality and honors your lifestyle, yet challenges you to push through your status quo to get you to where you need to be in a way that honors your needs.

Katie: Such good advice. And yeah, I love that people like you are talking about this and raising more awareness of that there is so much value in our own experience and our own...like, listening to our own body.

And being an “n equals one”, and experimenting on ourselves to find out what works. Because truly, at the end of the day, I've always thought, you know, it doesn't matter what a thousand studies say, if you found what works for you, then that is what's gonna help you live a longer, healthier life. And so, I love that you are bringing awareness about this, and I appreciate your work so much. I think blue zones are endlessly fascinating and I love that you've been to some of them. They are on my bucket list to travel to as well. But thank you for sharing your experience and your insight from having actually been on the ground there, and teaching us today.

Caroline: Absolutely. Can I share a couple of gifts with your audience?

Katie: Sure.

Caroline: Okay. So if they subscribe through [bearfoodangel.com](http://bearfoodangel.com), they will receive a comprehensive, free "Which Fats to Eat, Which Fats to Ditch" guide as a gift, because 80% of our diet consists of fats and oils, whether from whole food source, processed foods or restaurants. What kind of fats and oils we consume has a huge positive impact on our weight, energy, stamina, mental clarity and health. So that's one gift I wanna give. The second one is I'm opening up my calendar for a limited number of 30-minute free discovery consultation call through [calendly.com/barefoodangel](http://calendly.com/barefoodangel). After completion of the discovery consultation, you know, the caller will receive a PDF of my book, "50 Shades of Grain: The Truth About Eating Bread and Feeling Great," and they'll receive brands of breads that I recommend and artisan sourdough bread recipe. And of course, if they have a hard time connecting for some reason, I know there was a glitch a couple of days ago, people connecting through that site, [calendly.com/barefoodangel](http://calendly.com/barefoodangel), you can contact my team at 818-839-0272 to schedule a time. Mention code “wellnessmama”. I hope that helps.

Katie: Wonderful. I'll make sure those links are in the show notes as well. So if you guys are driving or running or anything else that people do while listening to podcasts, just check out the show notes at [wellnessmama.fm](http://wellnessmama.fm) so you can find those links. And again, thank you to Caroline for being here, and thanks to all of you for sharing your most valuable gift of your time with us today. We don't take that lightly. And I hope you will join me again on the next episode of the "Wellness Mama Podcast."

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