



Episode 449: Randy Newberg on Seasonal Eating,
Sustainable Food Sourcing and
Learning From the Outdoors

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Katie: Hello, and welcome to the "Wellness Mama" podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and wellnesse.com. That's Wellnesse with an E on the end. It's my new personal care line. This episode talks all about seasonal eating, sustainable food sourcing, and lessons we can learn from the outdoors. I'm here with Randy Newberg, who has hosted popular TV shows, podcasts, and other platforms, all focused on self-guided public land hunting, but also about things like conservation and environmentalism. And I wanted to have him on to discuss some misconceptions about a lot of these things and to really delve into the difference between when we source our food locally and as sustainably and locally as possible, whether it be through gardening, through fishing, through hunting, and also about the lessons that we can learn individually and as families when we do this.

It was top of mind for me as my kids have gotten more into these things as they've gotten older. And I think in a lot of ways, some of the current generations are missing out on some of these lessons. And so we talk about things like the beautiful lessons of spending time outdoors, whether it be from small failures and what we can learn from that to the seasonality of our food and to the responsibility that comes with sourcing our own food. It was a really fun episode. I think you'll learn a lot. And with that, let's join Randy. Randy, welcome. Thanks for being here.

Randy: Katie, thank you for having me. I've been looking forward to this since you reached out to me, I'm excited.

Katie: I am excited too. I think this is a really important topic, especially for a lot of the parents listening because I think you are an expert in a lot of areas that, unfortunately, some of these current generations are missing out on in really important ways. But for anyone who's not familiar with you, I'd love to start by hearing a little bit about your backstory and how you became who you are now.

Randy: Yeah. My backstory, and maybe I'll start with what I do right now, is I promote media content related to outdoor activities, and mostly about acquiring natural organic food from wild landscapes. And that really came from growing up in a poor town in Northern Minnesota, a little town of 500 people, where if we ate it on...If it was on our table, there was a very good chance that we got it from fishing or from hunting, from gardening, from foraging, berry picking, or whatever. And so I've always had this really immediate connection to my food. And that's just carried with me through my whole adult life. And as I got older, and I only had one kid, so, Katie, those of you with multiple kids say having one kid, you're really not a parent, right? But as our son was growing up, I wanted him to have this connection to wild food. And now that we live in Montana, it's a great place to continue that connection. And my platforms that I produce are there to share all the benefits that come with that process.

Katie: I think that part definitely will resonate with the audience in different ways. I know when we first started learning about healthy eating and clean eating, I was having to source a lot of these things, kind of, I felt like almost on the black market. I was driving a couple of hours to buy grass-fed beef. And here, there's much more widespread availability of some of these things now, but I love that you talk about actually sourcing it yourself because I think there's something beautiful about having that direct connection to your food, whether it be something as simple as gardening or foraging, or things like what you do with the conservation side and with hunting. I think there's a lot to learn from all of that. And this is the question I usually just weave in but I think for you, this is gonna be a really fun one to actually explicitly ask, which is what are a few common misconceptions or areas of misunderstanding when it comes to the work that you do? Because I think...I mean, you do so much different work but I think there's so many misunderstandings in some of these areas.

Randy: Yeah, and probably the area where I do a lot of my work is in the hunting space. And there's a lot of immediate response to that, of, ooh, hunting. But for me, it's about my food. If somebody thinks, "Well, I go to the farmers' market and that's where I get my high-quality food," for me, and my lifestyle, and my family, and where I live, that farmers' market is the wild landscapes. So, I have this huge vested interest in how that landscape is cared for, how clean and productive it is. And I'm always saying, "Nobody wants dirtier air, or dirtier water, or less productive landscapes." And for me, that all comes back to the fact that it's where I get my food, and I want the highest quality food I possibly can. I want it to be sustainable. And so, a lot of people, I think, struggle with the understanding of how can you have this...I call it the environmental awareness.

The amount of environmental awareness I get when I notice changes to the landscape, either slow, almost glacial pace changes or rapid changes are very aware to me because this is where I get my food. I notice every little thing about temperature change, creating large die-offs of certain types of habitats, or I notice that, wow, the water flow here is not what it was 20 years ago. Oh, it's because we're diverting it for whatever purpose. There's just all of these environmental awareness factors that come to you as an understanding because of the basic connection you have that this land, this water provides what I eat.

And that's probably one of the first things that people are really interested to hear is this awareness. And it even takes its next step towards that as you spend more time and more time. And every time I go to turn on the air conditioner or turn on the furnace at my house, I realize that our cumulative demands, of which I'm a part of our society, all of a sudden that electricity or that natural gas is coming from somewhere. And in my case, I love to travel to Southern Wyoming, and it's probably coming at the cost to some sage grouse and to some pronghorn. So, knowing that my sliding of that little meter to a higher or lower temperature causes an impact to other wild things, causes me to be a whole lot more aware, and conscious, and diligent about, "Do I really need more air conditioning? Do I need more heat?"

And I can just list tons and tons of those kind of experiences in my life that I love eating fresh greens every day. Well, I live in Montana where it's hard to do. It's easy to do it seasonally, but not year-round. But I've come to understand that if I want fresh greens from California with every meal, I'm part of that collective impact that has converted the Central Valley of California, which historically was the greatest wetlands complex in the North American continent. That human pressure has converted that to mostly a manipulated landscape for the cause of human food. And so, it's all those little things that because of how I approach food, my mind goes to other places that some people would probably say, "That's weird." So, that's probably one of the environmental awareness factors, probably something that people don't quite understand about the hunting, fishing, foraging lifestyle that you can't deny it because it's part of what affects your food.

Katie: Yeah, that makes so much sense. And I think this is a really important topic that is applicable to everyone listening in different ways. And obviously, all of us living in different areas of the country, in different climates, there's gonna be some variation here but I think there's a lot of benefits to eating more seasonally and as locally as possible from the very basic, just the nutrient levels available in the food, but also to your point, how it's using so many more resources when we're importing foods and eating things that are out of season. And I'm a big fan of not just eating seasonally, but eating as much locally seasonally as possible and rotating, which means, unfortunately, like, there are times of the year where I definitely don't eat certain kinds of fruits. I eat a lot of seafood year-round because I live on the coast. But it definitely does change your perspective when you think of that.

And also, it feels like there are levels to this. So I'd love to go deeper on how all of us can incorporate some of these ideas. Like, for me, it's probably much more basic than what you're doing. But I have a rotating seasonal meal plan that focuses on at least the produce that's available at our local farmers' market or in our garden. And so I try to focus around those things when they're...Because that's also when they're the most nutrient-

dense. But what are some ways that all of us in our homes, even maybe people living in a city, can become more cognizant of eating seasonally and start to get the benefits of that?

Randy: Yeah, and, you know, farmers' market is a huge part of our life for me and my wife. In Montana, that farmers' market, there are people who figured out, even though it's February, maybe there's a way we can start early and we can have produce ready. And I'm willing to pay more for the quality of that food, and the fact that I know how it was sourced. And I would say, to your point, and you brought it up with farmers' markets or other organic markets, natural local food source markets are huge opportunities to lower how much impact we have on a bigger landscape. And for me, we have this wonderful seasonal activity where I live here in the Northern Rockies, where in the springtime, and right now, it's mostly about fishing. And the morels are out and it's mushrooms. And then throughout the summer, it's wild fish, wild fish, wild fish. And in the fall, it starts going over to berries and other natural wild fruit, if you want to call them fruits.

And then it transitions to protein, where in the fall, we are out there, whether it's deer, or antelope, or birds, or elk being the largest of our species. We are out there getting, you know, the better part of a year supply of natural wild, organic protein. And it is very much the lifestyle in the Northern Rockies where if you took away that natural protein harvest for a lot of families and said, "Oh, you should have to participate in the industrial agricultural system, one, cost-wise, it'd be very difficult for them, but two, the quality of the food that they'd be able to afford would be far, far less. And so, for me, we have kind of that same calendar. The hard part for us to fulfill in northern states is this gap in the wintertime of the produce. So, you know, a lot of us up here, we buy as much as we can or we grow as much as we can during that peak cycle, and through canning, through preserving, through dehydrating and elsewhere, in other ways, we're able to carry that forward through the winter.

And I don't wanna make it sound like it's a pure subsistence lifestyle because it's nearly impossible to live that today. But the quality of food that we are able to get from healthy natural landscapes is so much higher. And a lot of people will ask me, "Well, why is that so important to you?" And I'll tell them, "Go buy some canned peas and go pick some peas out of your garden, and tell me what you like the most. Tell me what you think are better for you." And they don't even have to think about that question. And I say, "The same applies to if someone wants to go and buy a chicken that's come through the industrial agriculture system or you wanna go and find a mountain grouse or a pheasant, it's the same exact comparison." The quality, the taste, the flavors, the sustainability, the impact on the landscape is far, far less. And so, we have that same seasonal calendar like you mentioned. It's just by our latitude is a little bit different.

Katie: Yeah, exactly. And I feel like, to your point, it doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing thing. And it would be very difficult in today's world to live entirely in that way. But there's so much we can all do on this, kind of, sliding scale. And I'm a big proponent of growing as much food as possible in your own yard, even if you'll just have a small patio, you can have a container garden. I'll admit that I have never been hunting, but I think this is also an important thing to talk about. My husband does hunt, my sons do, and my daughters actually now are as well. And I know that there's some people that push back on this idea or maybe don't really understand the importance of hunting or don't want to harm animals. And I think a lot of it comes from a well-intentioned

place that way. But I think there's maybe also some misconceptions when it comes to hunting because from my limited understanding, you can speak much better to this, in many cases, this actually can have a positive impact on the environment and the animal population as well. Is that right?

Randy: Yeah. And if we think about how the North American landscape was before settlement, it was a fully contained and balanced system. As quick as we start building cities, and dams, and highways, and, you know, all the human impact, subdivisions, in the last 300 years, we've moved wildlife to the margins of their historic habitat. The thing that many hunters are proud of is the fact that we, through our license fees, through our excise taxes, same with anglers, we are the number one funder of state wildlife agencies that are here to help wild things that are pushed to the margins of their habitat. So there's a lot of those type of benefits that are there. And it gives a voice to the sustainability of this. If your food, part of it, or majority of it, or even a small portion of it is dependent upon the health and sustainability of those wildlife populations, you become a big advocate for it.

And I think there's a lot of other life skills that come from having to go out and acquire your own protein, food, through hunting, through fishing, whatever it is. For me, I get a huge amount of satisfaction from this honest relationship I have with my food. And like I said, I grew up in this little rural community where I've had that relationship my entire life. And I've learned quickly that for me to eat and for me to live, something dies. And that's hard to accept, but it dies at my hands. And I want that honest responsibility that comes with it. It brings forth, even today after a lifetime of putting food in my freezer in this manner, it still comes with difficult emotions. And I cannot...when I'm out hunting or fishing and I decide, okay, this fish is gonna be dinner tonight...it seems that people have a little less concern about fish than they do about, you know, wild mammals or birds. But when I look at that, I have to say, "This is your responsibility. You are the one responsible for the death of this animal. You better utilize it. You better make the most of it and you better give back to the system more than you've taken so that the system can sustain."

And that's not just for how I acquire my protein. That's for about all the other things that I have to take responsibility for. And I get where each person is gonna wanna have a different approach to this. And I'm not saying there's only one path forward. But by seeking my own food, I exempt myself from these transaction cycles, as I call them, where we pay others to have to do these emotionally difficult things. We do it for, you know, economic reasons, economies of scale, lower food costs, and all that. But by hiring someone else to do the difficult work for us, I think we lose our sense of responsibility that comes with the fact that something died so we can live, as basic as that is. And some people don't like hearing that, and I get it because it's really hard to reconcile that. And when you're standing there with a warm bird in your hand or you're standing over this deer, you really struggle with that. I don't care who you are, to this day, I struggle with that.

But I think responsibility is a good thing. It causes me to think and act according to what those thoughts and emotions are that I'm having at that time. And it gives me this big sense of satisfaction that this food that's on my table, it came because of my efforts, through my efforts, and I'm responsible for it, how do I make sure this system sustains itself? And I don't know, there's no other place in my life where I get that deep sense of responsibility in this really heavy heart at times of, man, I wish there was a way around this but this is the

reality. I don't quite get that when it's a pork chop that I got at a restaurant like I do if it's a deer, or a bird, or a fish that I took with my own efforts.

Katie: Yeah, that makes complete sense. And I can see how when you have that level of responsibility, you would probably cut down so much on waste and you would wanna use every part of the animal. You have such a different appreciation, like you said, for where that came from. And I guess I think of this on the spectrum is the opposite of, like, feedlot meat, which I think any health expert, or environmentalist, or vegans, we can all agree that feedlots are not good for animals or good for people. And to me, this is the complete other direction because it goes beyond even just grass-fed meat, for instance, that's raised in a wonderful pasture environment. These are animals that are living in their wild environment and eating a varied diet and getting exercise and exposure to all the aspects of nature that are so good.

And I saw this, my oldest son shot his first deer last hunting season. And it was really interesting to watch him work through that mentally, that process of it, and kind of feeling the level of the pride of being able to bring food home to the family, but also that responsibility and realizing the gravity of actually having brought that food home and what that meant. And I saw him be so excited and so proud to be able to cook a deer, like, as our Easter dinner or our Christmas dinner, and how he wanted to make sure every little last piece was used, and then the bones were made into broth. And it was really interesting to watch him go through that process. And you're right, I think so many people miss out on that in the modern world. And admittedly, I've never been hunting so I haven't had the direct experience but I got to watch it through my son.

Randy: Yeah, and as you're saying that, Katie, I'm putting myself in your son's shoes when I was 14 years old, the first deer I shot, I cried my eyes out. I couldn't believe, what have I done here? And it was hard and it's still not easy. But then as you were saying, there comes this pride of, you know, I accomplish this by providing and you know what? This animal is worthy and valuable, such that every piece of it should be utilized. And I think that's another part of the lifestyle that I come from and a lot of my audience adheres to is just waste is not...And probably all of us in our lives, we don't waste anything on purpose. But when you feel that this animal gave its life, your sense of utilizing as much as possible down to the hide for the leather, the bones, as you mentioned, whatever part it might be, the tongues, the organs, it's like, I gotta make the most of this.

And with that also comes a sharing aspect. And a good friend of mine, Shane Mahoney, who speaks on this cultural, I'll call it, reconciliation of the emotion versus the reality, he says, "Does anybody ever come over and say, 'Hey, I'd like to share this piece of beef I bought at the butcher shop today?' But so often they come and say, 'Hey, I was lucky enough to take this deer, this elk, do you want some? Can I share this with you?'" There's a sharing aspect to wild food that is present in a way that I see in no other part of our food world. And like you were observing how proud your son was to have provided, and part of that is that sharing aspect. I'm here to share the cultures of...No matter what culture you come from, there has been a sharing community aspect of food since time began. And hunting is one place where that's still very present today.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. And I think also, it points to so many of these skills, you touched on this a little bit in the beginning, but the skills that we can learn, not just from hunting but from interaction with the outdoors, in general. And I feel like this is something that we have largely separated from in modern society and that I think is really important. Definitely we make an effort in our family for our kids to spend a lot of time outdoors. And certainly, I don't think it's nearly as much as it could or should be. But I feel like there are so many really, really valid and applicable life skills that come from spending time in nature, whether it be hunting, or whether it just be camping, or hiking, or having an interaction with the environment in these different ways. And I know you've talked about this some in the past as well, like what are some of these life skills from a parent's perspective that we as families and for our kids can learn from our time outdoors?

Randy: Oh, boy, this list could get long, Katie. For me, the life skills that I now, at my age, and having been a business owner for 30 some years I look back at, what were the important life skills that helped me be successful in business and where did I get those? And so many of them were being in the out of doors. And I'm not saying only for hunting or fishing, but all outdoor activity. And I'll just give some really simple ones that I take for granted. But when I introduce new people to these outdoor activities, I get their feedback that tells me, wow, this was not a life skill they had. And part of it is dealing with uncertainties. You take a person and you say, you know, "We're gonna hike out of here in the dark and it's 2 miles, and we gotta traverse this and go through there," that is frightening for a lot of people. But after they do it the first time or two, they lose that fear. And the fear comes from uncertainty.

So, how do we get out of our comfort zones and force ourselves to deal with discomfort? And the outdoor spaces are full of opportunities to do that, whether it's okay, I read these books about...Like, I live near Yellowstone National Park here in Montana. So many folks who come here think there's a grizzly bear waiting behind every tree and gonna grab them and eat them or something. And so there's a lot of uncertainties just dealing with landscapes, wild landscapes, where you realize that between weather, the elements, other species out here, I am no longer in control. So, the lack of control over other elements is a life skill I have where it's easy for me to focus on the factor or the features that I can control and not fret and worry about those that I cannot control. I can't control the weather. I can't control the, you know, moon and sun. I can't control so many things and I'm comfortable with that. When you're out fishing, or you're out hunting, or you're out foraging, you have to have a plan of where am I gonna go to acquire this food?

And usually, you fail. You'll fail about 9 out of 10 times. Failure is a life skill and how to handle failure, how to have resolve and figure out, okay, I failed that time, but I learned from it and I'm gonna apply what I learned in my failures to eventually reach a point of success. I touched on the responsibility aspect that comes with taking your own food from the lives of wild things. Hard work. There is no pursuit in the outdoors that if you wanna be successful at that comes without hard work. And I could just go on and on this list that I put together of these kinds of things. I was doing a presentation and someone asked me the question of, "You've bought and sold and managed these businesses, you've been very successful but what do you attribute it to?" And I said, "You know, I think if I had to attribute most of it to, it'd be the fact that I was a very poor elk hunter when I first started, and I made years and years of mistakes, and I should write a book called the 'Elk Hunter's MBA' because there's all these business skills that come from these outdoor pursuits."

You're taking in all kinds of information at one time. What's the wind doing? What's the animal doing? What are the other people in the landscape doing? What type of conditions, habitat, season? You're just taking in tons and tons of information really rapidly and you have to make a decision in 10 seconds, 20 seconds. And those are life skills and business skills that I get nowhere else. In all the activities I do, all the courses I watch, all the conferences I go to, none of those life skills are taught in those places the way they are taught in outdoor activities.

Katie: I love that you brought up the idea of failure too because certainly in business and in many aspects of adult life, you learn more from failure. And I've often said, it's funny to me that school teaches you lessons and then gives you a test because life often just gives you a test and that's how you learn the lessons. We do it backwards in school. But I think, you know, as a parent, we don't wanna make life hard for our kids and we don't want to set them up for hard things on purpose necessarily, but we also can recognize that that is one of the better learning experiences they can have. And I think that's why things like time outdoors, or travel, or just any kind of activity that challenges limits like that is a great family activity to do because it lets them learn these lessons in, kind of, a micro way with us there to help them but they get to internalize some of those really important lessons.

One of our family mottos is, "You were made to do hard things." And we often end up saying that things like if it's hiking, or if it's something outdoors, or camping, or time when they're hungry, or my kids have definitely said it back to me a couple of times. We went cliff jumping, and I didn't wanna jump because it seemed scary and they're like, "Mom, you were made to do hard things, you can do it." But you're right, I think we learned so many lessons. And this is a great way to have a shared experience that teaches a lot of that without, you know, intentionally putting our kids in a tough situation realizing life will create those for them but that it's a bonding experience that's just filled with so many lessons.

Randy: Yeah, and you touched on a great point there, Katie, and I always tell my wife, if ever I'm going to do a t-shirt with one slogan that has a piece of advice that I think I've learned through my life, the t-shirt would say, "Be uncomfortable." Any aspect of my life, whether it's the out of doors or my interaction with other people or my business life, when I'm uncomfortable, that's when I know I'm learning. It's when I know my mind is expanding and being pushed to places that in my comfortable mindset, I'd normally avoid. But by avoiding that, I miss out on so much. Through this discomfort comes a level of learning that is so valuable to what I do. And from that learning comes the confidence for the next time or the next event or some parallel event. And when we get confident through this whole experience, eventually we come around where we are not uncomfortable. Our fears have become less because of this path that we've followed there that goes from discomfort to learning, to confidence. And when we do that, we act more boldly in all aspects of our life. We're more confident, we're more bold, and we make better decisions. And so, my life t-shirt would say, "Be uncomfortable."

Katie: I love that. That's awesome.

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And I think also while we're talking about this, there's the sustainability and conservation aspect as well as far as protein sourcing. I mean, certainly, like I said before, there's that sliding scale and I think we can all agree that mass farming with horrible conditions for the animals is not good for them or for human consumption. But this is, in my mind, if you're going to consume animal proteins, the best way to do it because these animals are contributing to the ecosystem and being part of it during their lifetime. And I think this is also a misunderstood area. I've talked about it a little bit with the idea of ranchers who are pasture-raising cattle, for instance, and they're being very careful about land ratios and making sure that...and how that can actually be very regenerative and rebuild wetlands and help with the environment. But I would assume this applies even more so when we're talking about actual wild game that are existing entirely in their natural environment for their whole lifetime.

Randy: Yeah, and part of that gets to this sustainability giving back more. But if you think about how a harvest of let's say an elk happens, the elk, you're fortunate, finally everything comes together, you take all of the human consumable parts that you can and you leave some of it there. And when it's there, along comes the scavenger, the coyote, the bear, the Raven, the whatever, and it becomes part of the soil again. But taking that even to a bigger and wider place, as folks that hunt, fish, whatever it is, they tend to have a very high, I'll call it, conservation ethic. And it expresses itself in many ways, and I'll use some examples. There's an organization, Ducks Unlimited, that is mostly hunters and bird watchers. And through the course of their history since 1937 when they were founded to conserve wetlands...some of our most vital landscapes are

wetlands for water quality, flood control, you know, diversity. The most diverse landscapes we have in terms of wildlife of all sorts are wetlands.

So Ducks Unlimited just surpassed 15 million acres of conserved wetlands. And for a little understanding of scope of that, that's as big as Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut combined. And they've done it for the purpose of waterfowl and other species dependent on wetlands. And if you take a look at the Upper Great Plains, the Dakotas, Minnesota, Eastern Montana, down into, you know, even Kansas and Nebraska, the immense pressure a country of 330 million people is putting on that landscape for agricultural production is intense. And as the planet races to 8 billion people, the pressure gets even more, and the pockets and pieces that get conserved become that much more valuable to the bigger landscape, and much of that in those areas, that geographic area I just talked to, are wetlands. And I'm very proud of the work that Ducks Unlimited has done.

And we can go to many other groups that work on these conservation issues on large landscape conservation. One is the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. That's very well-known in the West. And its efforts are to conserve wild landscapes for the benefit of elk, their habitat, and other wildlife. And the other wildlife part of that is very important to all of us. Because who wants a world without wild things? I don't. I am so attached to wild things that I cannot envision a world without wild things. And so, I'm very proud of the fact that hunters, anglers, we tax ourselves. We put an 11% excise tax on all the equipment we use. Well, I'd love for there to be even a 3% excise tax on tents, and sleeping bags, and everything else that we use in the outdoors that could help augment that funding that is required for conservation. As land prices grow and grow, conservation gets more and more expensive.

And I think people are saying, "Well, he's connecting a whole loop here of the sustainability part of it." And that's where I'm trying to go with it is, yes, this land gives me something to eat but I have a responsibility to that animal that I took and to me and future generations to do what I can to give back more in the way of conservation, and cleaner air, and cleaner water, and more productive landscapes. And that's a part of the...You know, back to your first question of "Is there a lot of misunderstanding" or just, you know, not the awareness, I think the amount of conservation work that hunters and anglers do is probably one that could use a little bit more sunlight shone on it.

Katie: Yeah, that was something surprising for me to learn was just how much they are driving a lot of those movements and really, really do care about them. And I think I've said before too when it comes to especially the health aspects of this, but I think it applies here as well, often online especially, we tend to focus on maybe the 2% or 3% of things we disagree on rather than so much that we can all agree on and all get behind. And that's where the real change would happen is if we could focus on the common core things that we have the ability to change when working together that benefit all of us.

Randy: Yeah, I've yet to meet a person in America who says, "I want dirtier water. I wanna see the Cuyahoga River start on fire again like it did in 1969." Nobody says that. So, regardless of where our differences lie,

exactly what you said, that 2% to 3% where we may disagree, the beautiful part of the country we live in, as a general rule, we put a high priority on wild things and the landscapes that they need. We have a Clean Air Act, we have a Clean Water Act, we have all these amazing things that over the course of my lifetime, and I'm 56 years old, every year, the collective American conservation ethic has improved the landscape, made the water a little cleaner, the air a little cleaner, such that today, we have an abundance that may be the issue today is do we take some of this for granted? We haven't seen a river start on fire on the 6:00 news feed. We haven't driven to every small town to see this big mushroom cloud of smog like there was in the early 1970s before the Clean Air Act forced us to have to use unleaded fuel. There's all these things that are so great about the collective conservation ethic in the United States that I get excited just talking about it. And hunters and anglers are a very critical piece of that.

Katie: And I think another aspect of this that the listeners might be a lot more familiar with is the health side. And we touched on this a little bit that this is some of probably, I would argue in a lot of ways, the healthiest way to obtain your food, whether it be hunting, or foraging, or gardening, anything where you're in direct contact with your food source is almost always gonna be much more nutrient-dense, or secondarily, supporting local farmers, local fishers, etc. But I think from the research I did on you, you actually have, kind of, a health story as well, when it comes to this, don't you? And you have a little bit of background in this as well?

Randy: Yeah, I have a liver condition that is called...I'm not gonna get into the technical term, I don't have the plumbing going into my liver. So my body gets hypersensitive to all types of foods. If you can think about not having the blood getting cleansed in your liver, except for the recirculation side on the arterial side. Maybe I get about 20%, 25% of the blood flow someone else by size would get. So I have a hypersensitivity to what food aspects do to my body, to my blood composition. And I can tell you, hands down, there's a reason I don't go to whatever big-box supermarket and say, "Well, what's the cheapest burger here?" It doesn't agree with me. I go to my freezer and say, "Oh, here's an antelope and I'm gonna make, you know, antelope lasagna, or burgers, or whatever." But having that current condition for me that I've been dealing with now for 16 years...It's funny you say that because I've grown so accustomed to my food selection being dependent upon that until you answered the question, I'd almost forgot about it because I live with that as my daily life decisions.

So, what am I having tonight? There's a friend of mine in Billings, Montana who sources wild Alaska seafood. And I get it from him because I know it's taken from small fishermen who have this sustainable lifestyle and this business model of that. And so, I would way rather do that little piece of halibut, and yeah, I paid a little bit more for it, but I know tomorrow after I eat it, I'm gonna feel the way better. It's gonna just be that much better for my body and for my specific condition, I probably have this hypersensitive needle that just vibrates, saying, "Whoa, don't eat that. Oh, yes, eat this." So, that has directed my food sourcing and has probably put me even further down this path of wild protein wild food.

Katie: That's wonderful. I think yeah, so important. And all of us obviously have different pursuits in that. I talk a lot about how health is so personalized and each of us need to figure out our own dietary and supplement

strategies and what works. And it sounds like you've figured that out for you. But that also just really speaks to the power of foods like this and how they really can support the body in such unique ways. And like we talked about at the beginning, this obviously varies by what part of the country you live in and what foods you have access to, but we can all do this in some way or in different ways. And even things like we have beehives at our house, and my kids are beekeepers, and that lets them have a direct experience with where that comes from, and is also, as a homeschooling mom, a very cool learning experience. So I love that you talk about this. And I think it also...all of these things, we touched on a little bit already, but really also help with that self-sufficiency aspect, which is a big focus for me as a parent. I have a motto that I don't do anything for my kids that they're capable of doing themselves. But I think as parents...

Randy: I love that.

Katie: ...we often underestimate just how capable and self-sufficient our kids can be. And I think things like spending time in nature or learning where our food is sourced and contributing to that, it lets them really step into that autonomy, and understand it, and feel like they're contributing because they actually are. And I think that can be a really...at least what I'm seeing, a very important thing, especially as kids, kind of, enter the teenage years. And that's psychologically where they're supposed to be. They get to feel the pride or the contribution of having actually done something that was important to the family. And that seems to really help them stay in a good place through the teenage years. I'm still early in the teenage years, so I haven't fully navigated them yet. But so far, it seems like a great thing.

Randy: Yeah, I like I said, I only have the one and my son is so environmentally aware. And I know a lot...he'll tell me a lot of that comes from growing up in a lifestyle where we gain our own food the way we do. And another factor that I often overlook is I don't care whether it's gardening, foraging, fishing, hunting, however you acquire this food, you think about the values of being outdoors, and the exercise, and the work, and the manual labor that comes with a lot of this, that's a way healthier lifestyle than saying, "I'm gonna stay in my air-conditioned vehicle and drive through the drive-thru and get a burger." Acquiring that food did not give you many health benefits like going out and berry picking or even planting your own garden. I mean, look at how many people, even as hard as it is to grow a garden in the inner mountains of Montana, how many people here just enjoy the fact that I'm outside, I'm doing something productive with my hands, and I'm creating food for me or for my neighbors who I'll share it with. I don't know how you put a value on that.

Katie: Absolutely. Are there some good research sources you can point people toward if they are new to this idea of, kind of, wild sourcing of food, whether it be to learn more or to find maybe local resources for some of these things that they can start to look to?

Randy: Yeah, I'm not sure if...you know, it depends on what platforms they look for. The best source I have for this is there's a person in Sacramento, California who runs a very large platform called Hunt, Gather, Cook. And his name is Hank Shah. And Hank is one of the leaders in understanding our food, where it comes from. He's got a large Facebook page. He's got unbelievable articles there about where it came from, how it was

sourced, the people involved, the cultures involved. And then also, here's where you can get some of this stuff, whether it's at a market, or whether you wanna go and get it with your own hands. I find myself out on Hank's platforms all the time. And I don't get anything for saying that. It's just that...I've been exposed to many of these platforms. And I find Hank's platforms, the Hunt, Gather, Cook platforms to do the best job of the entire loop, the entire circle of natural wild food of all types.

Katie: Awesome. I will make sure that's linked in the show notes, that those are at wellnessmama.fm for any of you guys listening, and I've also been taking notes, and I'll link to some additional resources on some of these topics we've been talking about. But speaking of links, a question I really love to ask toward the end of interviews is if there's a book or a number of books that have had a profound impact on your life that you would recommend and if so, what they are.

Randy: Yeah, there's one is...you can get this on Audible. It's not a very long book. It's called the "Sand County Almanac." And it's written by Aldo Leopold. He is known as the American grandfather of wildlife conservation. It was written in the 1930s and published I believe in 1949, just after he passed away. And it's this timeless observation of the collective impacts that he's seen as...And if you can imagine in 1930, when the United States had 140 million people, to be thinking about these things compared to where we are today. But it was about this growing planet and the effects it was having on these foundational resources of land and water. And these concise observations that you would normally take for granted, okay, someone's cutting a piece of firewood, well, as he's going through that at every tree ring, he's talking about, "Oh, this was what happened in this year and that year."

And it just is a remarkable job simply written but concise to explain how we as humans, we are the proverbial bull in the China shop when it comes to wild places, and wild things, bearing the cost, paying the bill, writing the check for our existence. And if anyone wants to have a very keen or acute message, this book, "The Sand County Almanac," I can assure you, it's going to build in all of us an environmental consciousness and awareness of what every one of our daily impacts have on the land, the air, and the water, just like it did the...well, I first read it in college. And as I get older and have more life experiences, I go back and I read this book all the time. And it just adds even more to my awareness every time I read it. And I would say that even though it was written by a person in the '30s and published in the '40s, it's even more applicable to the world that we live in today than it was to Aldo Leopold's world. "The Sand County Almanac," it's an easy read. But it's for my view of the world in a big way.

Katie: I love it. I will put that link in the show notes as well. That's a new recommendation on here. And I'm curious to check it out as well. Sounds like one of my kids would like, also. And lastly, if there's any advice that you would like to get out far and wide or to leave with our audience today, what would it be?

Randy: Stay uncomfortable, don't be comfortable. I know I touched on that earlier but I now get worried if my life feels too comfortable, whether physically or mentally, especially as I get older, I feel that I start getting lazier and I almost wanna be in these comfortable mental spaces. But that tells me I'm not learning. I'm not

trying to see the world through a different lens. And the lens we see the world through today is the cumulative life experiences we've had. So, what our life experiences I can have for myself, put myself into so that I have to see the world differently, I have to be uncomfortable. And it forces me to think about things. And so, my advice is, be uncomfortable. Put yourself in those places where you're uncomfortable because once you follow that path, you will become...At least speaking for my own self, I feel like I've become a better person. I'm more understanding. I'm more aware. I'm more capable. I operate less on fear and more on fact. And I'll always find places to make myself uncomfortable. So, that would be my piece of advice, Katie, be uncomfortable.

Katie: Well, I'd be a fan of you making those into shirts. Would definitely keep a few.

Randy: If I do, you'll get the first one.

Katie: Awesome. I'll take you up on that. And thank you for the time of being here today. Like I said at the beginning, I think these are really important topics and often misunderstood ones. And I love that you are doing so much work to help bring awareness and education in this space, and all these spaces. So thank you for making time today.

Randy: Thank you, Katie. Thanks so much. I hope you have a great day. And if you ever get to Montana, I hope we get a chance to visit.

Katie: I will hopefully take you up on that one day as well. And thanks to all of you guys for listening, for sharing your most valuable resources, your time, and your energy with both of us today. We are both so grateful that you did, and I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of the "Wellness Mama" podcast.

If you're enjoying these interviews, would you please take two minutes to leave a rating or review on iTunes for me? Doing this helps more people to find the podcast, which means even more moms and families could benefit from the information. I really appreciate your time, and thanks as always for listening.