Episode 468: Daniel Vitalis on Human Domestication and Our Diminishing Relationship to Nature
This podcast is brought to you by Beekeeper's Naturals, my source for bee powered products. I love bees and the many benefits of all their amazing compounds since learning how to keep bees and be a beekeeper as a kid. And I was so excited to find a company that is just as passionate about supporting bees and sharing the benefits of their amazing products as I am. Their propolis spray is a go-to in my house. If you're not familiar with propolis, it's a really cool substance that the bees make to keep the hive sterile and safe and to protect it from pathogens and invaders. And this became part of the Beekeepers family when my friend and Beekeeper's Naturals founder Carly Stein was inspired to reinvent the medicine cabinet. She discovered propolis, which is like I said a powerful ingredient that bees use to protect their hive from germs. She had struggled with low immunity her whole life and propolis was the first thing that actually made her feel like her health was in her own hands and that experience inspired her to tackle modern health issues from stress-based low immunity to brain fog to energy through ingredients found in nature and found with the bees. This is a go-to in our house, we use it almost daily and they have other amazing products as well including some that give me a big boost of energy like B.LXR and ones my kids loved like B.powered which has a mixture of all kinds of beneficial bee ingredients from bee pollen to honey and even royal jelly. There is an exclusive offer just for you for listening. Beekeeper's Naturals has created a discount, if you go to beekeepersnaturals.com/wellnessmama and use the code wellnessmama, you will save 20% on your first order. You can also find Beekeeper's Naturals now nationwide in 2,000 stores including Target, Whole Foods and Sprouts.

This episode is brought to you by Four Sigmatic... the mushroom superfood company I’ve been raving about for years! They have many products that have become beloved staples in our home, but a few I love most are the Lion’s Mane coffee packets for the morning, and their reishi elixir packets before bed to help with sleep. I’m also really enjoying their protein powder right now. They have a peanut butter flavor that’s delicious on its own blended with water and is packed with beneficial mushrooms. I often make a protein shake on busy mornings or after a workout and love the convenience and brain/energy boost. Check out my favorite products and all of their products by going to foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama. Use code wellnessmama to save 10%.

Katie: Hello, and welcome to "The Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and welnesse.com. That's welnesse with an E on the end. And this podcast goes deep on the idea of human domestication and our diminishing relationship with nature. And I was really fascinated. I loved doing this interview. I'm here with Daniel Vitalis, who is the host of the "WildFed" TV show and podcast. And for over a decade, he has taught in the U.S. and abroad about living healthier, more integrated, nature-based lives. He's also a successful entrepreneur and founder of the nutrition company Surthrival. And like I mentioned, he's hosting that popular podcast and TV show of the same name.

We really get to go deep in this one about his journey, going back to anthropology, what led to changes in his own diet, and why things... Like, we eat a much more limited diet than we think we do, the huge nutrient
differences between wild plants and domesticated plants, and the drastic way that humans, plants, and animals have all been domesticated. We don't often think of that in terms of ourselves, but he contrasts the idea of a zoo and a farm and makes a strong case for why we, as modern humans, are essentially living on a factory farm of sorts of our own and how we can break free of this idea and at least get the health benefits of returning to our more natural roots, even if we can't fully do that in today's world. And we also have some fun things like the most unusual things he has ever eaten, which I think will surprise you, and a lot more. Tons of practical advice and some really fascinating concepts in this episode I know that you will enjoy, so let's jump in. Daniel, welcome.

Daniel: Thank you so much, Katie. How are you doing today?

Katie: I'm doing great. I'm excited to chat with you because I really wanna delve into things like human domestication and how we are spending enough time in nature and all that that encompasses. But first, I have in my research notes that you were actually vegan when you were a teenager, but that you have been studying nutrition since your teenage years. And I have also been studying nutrition for a long time. So I'd love to hear a little bit about your background and your story related to that.

Daniel: Well, it's funny. If you've been studying it a long time, you know that it's a very fashionable world. It's fickle and it changes all the time. So, when I was... I'm 42 for reference point today. I started about 15, 16 years old. And there was no internet really, at that time. You know, very little information available. And so you had what you had access to. Health food stores, at that time, were, sort of, dingy beige places that smelled like oats and had 10 ingredients you could get, you know. There was just not a health food world or health food scene. There was no farm-to-table scene at that time, American food culture was at its low point. And it was sort of generally believed that vegetarianism was the answer to healthy life and longevity. And there wasn't really anybody questioning any of that. And there was no ancestral health movement at the time. There was no paleo diet. There was no primal diet. There was none of this ancestral living stuff going around. And so you just had access to what you had access to. And as a 16-year-old kid, I didn't have much of a background education, particularly around things like anthropology. So for me to try to work out because my initial question at that age, you know, I remember, I had this very pivotal moment where I was sitting on the lawn out front of a supermarket, sort of on a hill, looking down at the supermarket, which was just this like, massive Costco like structure. And I was eating a mango, a really good one. And I was thinking, "Man, this has gotta be what people are supposed to eat." You know, and I started thinking, like, what is the natural human diet? What is that? That's what I've always been interested in. And it was unclear to me at the time. So I had to reason it out. You know, and I thought, well, we must not have had fire. I mean, we would probably eat raw foods and, and man, it's so hard to catch an animal with your hand. I just kind of worked it out. Like, we must be vegetarians.

You know, and I went with that for a couple of years. And down the road, I got my hands on some books that now it's funny looking back, I think they were from the Hare Krishnas. And they were really pushing veganism pretty heavy, you know. And I bought into all of this stuff. So I got into animal rights and I got into eating raw plant food. And I did it very hardcore for about a decade. In that time, the internet kind of came up and there
was a lot of raw vegan people on the internet making a lot of noise. And I got into that world. I spent a decade there, really pushing hard, doing that stuff to the extreme. No salt, no oil, nothing cooked. Only plant food. I had a lot to learn and I didn't know what I didn't know.

Katie: Wow, I can... You totally made me remember the smell of the health food stores we used to go to, like that tea tree and oats kind of smell.

Daniel: Yeah, yeah.

Katie: You're so right. Early on for me, as well, it was like you couldn't find any of these things in normal grocery stores. And I remember buying foods out of, like, the back of people's trucks or, like, meeting up with these little co-ops. It's come a long way thankfully, since then. And I have a lot of respect for the fact that you reasoned your way into that by actually kind of trying to go back to first principles, even as a teenager, and things like what were we designed to eat? And certainly, like, I went through a phase as well of, I really love animals. And so I was like, "Oh, well, of course, I don't want to eat animals because I wanna respect them." And I think a lot of people kind of go through that process. And I think it's a beautiful thing to care and be concerned for how animals are raised and treated certainly. I think that's something that whatever diet we're talking about, I always like to go back to it. I think we could all agree on the humane treatment of animals, like I don't hear anyone arguing for factory farming, or for animals, you know, being kept in horrible conditions. But what was the evolution like beyond there? Because you've obviously come to a much different conclusion now. What is your current view of what the original human diet was and how did that evolution happen?

Daniel: Well, what's kind of nice now that I've grown up and I understand the world a little bit better, is that I don't really think there's much question about what the human diet is. It's like we know from so many centuries of anthropology. We've looked at people pre-industrially and pre-agriculturally around the world and we know that human beings are hunter-gatherers. And I have this running joke... You know, Paul Saladino, you know, had me on his show recently. He's, you know, one of the big voices around the carnivore diet and great guy. You know, we were sort of talking about plants versus animal diets and stuff like that. And I was sort of teasing him because he's big into this idea of, you know, a carnivorous all animal food diet. And I was joking... Well, you know, I see it as this sort of pendulum. If you're gonna have vegans on one hand, you're gonna end up with eventually, you know, people who promote an all-meat diet on the other end, it's just this is what happens. You know, it's sort of like how our politics are. We get polarized. And I joke about, like, well, what if somebody came out with this, like, gasp? I know it sounds crazy. But, you know, the omnivore diet, it's like, that's what our diet is. We are on an omnivore diet.

Now the thing about human beings is we're really cosmopolitan. So outside of places like Antarctica, where we just certainly just couldn't reach it and it wasn't habitable to us. But everywhere else in the world that we could go and places that most of us would think are uninhabitable. So if you think about, you know, how the, you know, Northern latitude tribes lived before contact with Westerners in places like the Arctic, you'd think, well, that's not habitable. But turns out it is, even without electricity, even without agriculture, even without,
you know, metal tools, people were living there. So, what's unusual about people is we live all over the world. And that means what we eat as omnivores is different depending on where you go. So, the diet of a tribe living without modern entrapment in the Amazon is gonna look really, really different than what it's gonna look like as an Arctic Hunter. But there are similarities we can draw. And one of the key things that we see is that, well, first of all, we have only been farming and domesticating crops for a very short period of time.

So we couldn't look at our diet today and be like, "Well, these carrots are natural food for us or lettuce is a natural food for us," not in its domesticated form, it can't be because these are new inventions. We think of them as living things but they're inventions in the way that a doxin or a chihuahua is an invention. You know, they come from wolves, the wolf is the wild, natural animal. But these dogs we have today are artifacts that come out of the wolf. And so similarly, most of the foods we're eating today are actually artifacts. They've been... Artifact comes from the same root as the word art. It means to be shaped by human will or shaped by human hands. And so, there is no natural German Shepherd, and there is no natural cow, and there is no natural, you know, lettuce except the wild progenitors of those creatures, right? So, we have to go back before that. And what we see is that all around the world, human beings eat, not just plants and animals, we also eat fungi and algae. So things from other kingdoms, algae are in this kingdom of life, we call the protists currently, you know, of course, mushrooms and other fungi, they're in their own kingdom fungi. So we eat from all these kingdoms of food, but we eat from whatever can be rendered edible, in the environment where people are. And that varies all over the place. And so, to me, that's a real good argument for a local diet.

Katie: I definitely agree with you on that one. And that is an interesting thought because I think a lot of people listening understand the importance of trying to source food as close to home as possible or at least the more nutrient density you're gonna find from sourcing things that are ripe and that were grown close to you and the economic benefits of supporting our local economy. There's so much that comes into that, but I don't know that many of us really step back and think about that domestication and how you just said, like, the things we eat now, were not the original things humans eat. And when you frame it with animals, I think of that, like, we have a micro golden doodle. And it's hard to imagine that his relatives were wolves, you know, but my daughter has a Bengal cat. And that one is a little easier to remember that there was a wild ancestor there. But what have been, kind of, some of the effects of that domestication of plants and animals on humans as a species? And I guess in what way can we coexist now with these modern strains of these things in the most optimal way?

Daniel: Yeah, well, it's a really complex question, but I'm glad you brought up cats and dogs because our dogs, the domestication is really obvious. Cats, it's almost like, are they domesticated? It's really interesting what their strategy is. Dogs went all in with people. Cats live on the outskirts of our domesticated lives, but they still hunt. Right? I mean, for people who are like, well, I really wanna support local wildlife, I really wanna have a life footprint on the earth, it's like, well, you can be vegan all you want but if you have a cat that goes outside, you're having a major impact on local wildlife. Cats kill birds like crazy, they're still pretty close to wild, but dogs give us a really good example. So, when we look at what happened to dogs when they were domesticated from the gray wolf, we see, probably the most obvious thing is what we call neoteny. And neoteny means to carry into adulthood juvenile characteristics. So, you look at a puppy, a wolf puppy, it's gonna have floppy ears and a curly tail and a playful demeanor. And when it becomes an adult wolf, those
things go away. But when you look at our adult dogs today, they carry those features forward. Another thing we see is what we call piebalding. This is an interesting feature of domesticated animals, like, sometimes the last people like, "Hey, is a Holstein cow, that's that black and white spotted cow that we get our milk from? Is that a white cow with black spots or a black cow with white spots?" You know? And the answer is, it's a black cow with white spots because white spots on an animal are one of the signs of domestication. So, my dog who's a brindle color dog has a white patch on her chest. That's a sign of domestication. So all these interesting features happen that are kind of carried through, we can kind of see some of these features in ourselves, like you look at adult humans today. And we're like big children because we are carrying this neoteny forward.

When it comes to our food, though, I think it gets very interesting. We have, especially with our plants, the plants that we eat today are very diminished form of what they are in the wild, particularly at a chemical level. So, you know, people who grow and anybody listening who's got a garden knows, man, you either have to fence that garden or use pesticides and herbicides, or you have to go to great lengths to keep things from eating your garden plants. Well, why is that? Because that doesn't seem to be happening in the wild. Plants seem to do just fine. What is it that they can't survive? Why does your lettuce never escape your garden and take over your lawn? That's very interesting because if I bring a dandelion to your yard, and you don't have any and I plant it, before you know it, your lawn is gonna be covered with dandelions. What's going on there?

What happens is when we domesticate plants, we breed out all of the toxins they produce. And those toxins are their internal pesticides. That's what protects them from herbivory. But we breed those out. Now, here's the clincher on that. Those chemicals we've bred out are what we call drugs or pharmaceuticals. So you hear sometimes that thing, well, something like 80% of pharmaceuticals are derived from plants. Well, that's the stuff we've bred out of our plants. That stuff has strong tastes. So when you bite down on a pharmaceutical and you get through that sugarcoating, you're like, "Ooh, it's bitter." Just like the flavor, that bitterness that's in wild plants, just like that bitterness that's in herbs, that bitterness is indicative of the fact that there are medicines there. So, herbalism is the science of using small doses of plant toxins, which the plant produces for its own protection. It's using small doses of those as medicine.

So part of the breeding of the domestication of our crops has been the loss of medicines, which has led to a widespread medicine deficiency, which is one of the reasons modern people are so dependent on pharmaceuticals and on herbal medicine, in order to stay healthy. Another thing that's happened, in addition to diminishing the amount of those secondary metabolites or plant toxins, we've also diminished the nutrient levels but increased the calorie load. So what happens is we end up with plants that are super high in carbohydrates, but super low in nutrition. So whenever we look at wild plants, and we compare them like a wild blueberry versus a domestic blueberry, we'll see the domestic one has higher sugar, but lower nutrients, and the wild one is gonna be lower in sugar, but it's gonna be higher in nutrients and antioxidants because it's producing those to survive in the wild environment. But when we create a cushy environment for our plants, they don't need to do any of that work.
So, think about somebody who's grown up... You know, a kid who grows up really wealthy, who never has to struggle, who has everything taken care for them. They get a car when they graduate. They get a condo given to them. And those kind of people often don't do as well in the world as people who have to struggle a little bit. Similarly, when you put a plant in fluffed up soil and you water it every day, and you can take care of all the conditions, you protect it from any herbivores, it gets lazy and its physiology, and it doesn't produce as much nutrients. It doesn't have to battle the sun, so it doesn't have to produce as much antioxidant. We start to diminish it. This is happening with our animals too. Obviously, I did a slideshow recently where I showed the wild progenitor of the cow and then showed the cow. I showed a wild progenitor of the sheep and then showed modern sheep, same with goats, same with pigs and you realize, whoa, these animals have lost all their defenses and have become sort of stupid, lumbering animals. They are not fit for the wild. So just like your golden doodle, if you set it free to run with the wolves, it would be amazing to me if it made it 24 hours without being predated upon, right? So here we are today modern humans.

And, you know, you think about, we are now in a civilization that has celebrity survivalists. You know, I was talking to somebody the other day from the show alone and it's like, wow, think about that. "Celebrity Survivalists," that's all of your ancestors were survivalists. All of them. Now we are like that lettuce grown in the soft soil. We're like the golden doodle living in the apartment. We aren't fit for our environment anymore. We're fit for the artificial environment, the built environment. We're very fit for the internet environment. But when we go out into nature, it's like we don't know how to survive anymore. And so, I mean, besides the heavy load of calories and the low load of nutrients, besides the lack of medicine, besides the dumbing down of our genome that's happened from domestication of food, one of the biggest things is we've come to see our natural environment like it's a foreign landscape. And most of us act like astronauts visiting another planet when we go into nature.

Katie: Wow. So many interesting points that you just said. One thing that made me think of is the idea of the more wild native plants. It makes me think of wine. Because a good friend of mine owns a wine company and their whole premise is they only source wines that have been dry-farmed, so they're not irrigated. And they typically don't mess with the terroir of the soil. They don't change anything in that. So the plants have to struggle. And the result is, like you said, a much lower sugar, higher nutrient compound and they're not spraying it with chemicals, either because the plant's stronger. But that really cracked me up when you mentioned the show alone because my kids have loved watching that one. But it is funny to think about when you frame it that way about "Celebrities Survivalists" that now as humans we're so intrigued by watching on TV, someone is like, "My gosh, they can survive in the wild." It is funny to think about. And I guess, looking backward, also makes me wanna look forward and think, you know, where do you think the future of this goes? Where is the food supply headed? Where are we as humans who are continually domesticated, where does that lead?

Daniel: Well, if you peruse the documents coming out from the food industry, coming out from the World Health Organization, coming out from... You know, Harvard just released their new, you know, I don't know what they call it. Now, it's not a food pyramid is like a pie chart. When you look big, you zoom out and you look big picture at everything, you start to see where the trends are going. So, based on my analysis, I'll tell you where it's headed. And I don't like this direction and I'm not supporting this direction. But unless we
intervene and make tremendous changes in how things are rolling out, where it's headed is towards 3D printed food. And so, what's happening in food science now is very few ingredients...

Well, actually, let me back up because I think there's an intermediate piece here that people should understand. One of the things about domestication is that you can take a domesticated animal or you can take a wild animal like a wolf, gray wolf, one species, Canis lupus, and you can breed it, down breed it and domesticate it until you have 500 varieties of dogs. These are all subspecies or different breeds or, technically, you could say races of dogs. Now, when you look at the 500 breeds of dogs, you see so much variety that to the untrained eye, these wouldn't be the same species. You might think, "Oh, well, the golden doodle and the Doberman pincer are different species." But no, they're the same species that breeds of the same species. So we think of with race with humans, this is really obvious. It's like, hey, a black person and an Asian person and a white person, hey, we're all humans. We're the same species but we're different breeds of the same species. Well, similarly, you get this with dogs, but you get 500 breeds. And we lose touch with the fact that they are all actually gray wolves. So, this happens with plants.

So my reason for bringing this up is if we go into the supermarket and we look at the vegetables that are available, it looks like a lot of variety in the way that if you went to the dog pound and you saw all these different dogs or you went to the airport and you saw all these different humans, you might think, oh, there's all this variety. But the reality is a lot of what's in the supermarket is the same species masqueraded as different breeds. So, my favorite example is of the plant called Brassica oleracea, which is where we get the wild plant is bred into broccoli, and cauliflower, and romanesco, and kohlrabi, and kale, and cabbage, and collard green, and Brussel, sprouts, and repine, those are all just one plant.

So, what's kind of freaky about that is even when you go up to the Arctic, and you think, "Wow, these people have a very short growing season, they must not eat a lot of variety of food," well, it turns out, they eat tremendously more species every year than the average domesticated person does. We're at a point now where the average Americans eating something like only 30 species a year, as opposed to the 100 to 300, that would be normal for a hunter-gatherer to eat. So we're getting way less variety of actual species in our diet. So, moving ahead, very few species can be turned... They can take four or five species and create out of it with 3D printing, what looks like a gazillion types of different food. But actually, it's all made out of a few ingredients, right? They wanna use things like crickets and Lupin seeds and, you know, a handful of algaes to produce these 3D printed cartridges. And the idea is that working together with your insurance company, you would actually have a 3D printed diet that was you were required to eat. And you would be given your cartridges and you would only be allowed to print off the food that was your doctor and your insurance company determined you needed, and you wouldn't be allowed to eat other foods. We're clearly moving away from natural animal foods towards, kind of, beyond burger-type foods.

And what the future of food looks more like astronaut food than what we think of as food. The problem is, most people don't even really remember what food is or know what food is. Most people have never had to define food. We've gotten so used to eating out of packages that people never see the creatures their food comes from. So this transition is pretty obvious and easy to see. So, the future looks like human beings
printing off food at home from very few ingredients that can be grown in mass to support these huge populations. And I don't like that outcome. And I'll be a real rebel against those kind of outcomes. But if you do the research, you see that is actually kind of where things are headed.

Katie: That's wild and futuristic to think about. But also after the last couple of years, I don't think anything would surprise me at this point. And it feels like we're also having, like you mentioned, beyond burger a resurgence in this idea of plant-based eating. It's become much more trendy again, recently. It seems like we certainly have big agriculture, pushing from behind with some of these massive companies that are so well funded. What do you see as the potential way to reverse that? Because I've had several podcast guests recently, who kind of broke down the science of why as humans, we do need animal foods and also how from an environmental perspective, the idea of regenerative agriculture is actually vital to reversing things like climate change into soil survival. But when we're already at this point where we're actually having a conversation about 3D printed food, what do you think it would take to reverse that trend at this point?

Daniel: It's a really tough question to answer. It would take sort of like a revolution. And why I say that is because if human beings are a modern domesticated form of ape, right, we’re an ape, one of the great apes. Our closest living relative would be the chimpanzee, the bonobo. After that, the gorilla and the orangutan. These are our relatives. We are a domestic ape. Imagine if you could domesticate a chimpanzee, the way you can domesticate a dog. Think about how freaky that would be. Because you’d be looking at something quite human, right? If they lost their hair and they learned how to be civil, it’d be like, "Whoa, we're getting a little too close to home here. Let's stick to the canids. It's a little bit more removed," right? Well, if we're domesticated, it's like, well, who's the domesticater? Right? Who runs this farm? Exactly. You know. So when you step back and you start to ask yourself, like, "Who's in charge of this factory farm?" The reason that we're going towards these kind of food principles, we're getting, you know, this idea of large scale animal food, for instance, sorry, large scale feeding of the population of plant foods. When you look at that, you know, it's under the guise of environmentalism. But those of us who've looked into it know that that's not really an accurate representation unless you're trying to run humanity like an animal on a factory farm. So, it's just more convenient on a CAFO to feed cows corn than it is to put cows on grass if you want to be in charge of large-scale operations. Well, we're treating our own civilization and our own population like their animals on a factory farm, for the extraction of labor, and the extraction of tax dollars. And this is like a giant human factory farm for domesticated apes. And zoologically speaking, we have a natural diet. But see, it's important that people understand the difference between a zoo and a farm. Okay? A zoo is a place where you have wild animals and a farm is a place where you have domesticated animals. A zoo is a place where you want the animals to live a long life because they're there for studying observation.

A farm is a place where you want animals to live like one to two years because you're trying to extract their meat at the peak moment, right? Zoo costs money to the public to run. A farm is a for-profit operation. Right? These are really different things. Now I'd ask people, hey, when you look at New York City, is that a farm or a zoo? Because when you look at a zoo, a zoo sets up an environment that looks like the animals' natural environment and feels like the animal's natural environment, so the animal will be healthy. You look at the farm, there's no interest in creating artificial environments for animals. It's just gonna be like the four concrete walls and slabs and things like that, right? Because it's not about the animal being healthy.
When you look at how we're living, it's like, wait a second, we're not recreating our natural environment. Not unless you're you have the wealth to do it. For most people, their apartments, their houses, their jobs, none of it looks like anything like what brings health to a human being. It's more like what is the most efficient way to extract labor? So, I would argue that we are not living in any kind of a zoo. We're living in more of a factory farm. And so to reverse that, it's like, the animals have to escape from the farm and create their own habitat. And until we're willing to do that or ready to do that, it's gonna be really challenging because there are forces underway. We've all seen recently how easily moldable our behavior can be when we're afraid. And so, this is something that's gotten... You know, I keep this sticker around, it says, "No one's coming, it's up to us." You know, just a reminder, like, "Hey, no one's coming to rescue us from this scenario." It's gotta take each person, sort of, stepping into their own sovereignty, starting to take care of themselves, and asking themselves what some self-sufficiency look like. Sadly, we have to because if you go with the flow and you go just with the grain, you go with the masses, you see where this leads, it leads to cancer and heart disease and early death and the full extraction of all of your wealth. By the time that you hit the dirt, if you hit the dirt, you'll probably hit a box, full of formaldehyde, not even the dirt.

But, you know, there's a full extraction of everybody's resources by the end, you know. And if you do make it with some resources, half that goes to the death tax. It's crazy where we're living in. So, we have to start to become self-sufficient and get smart about what's really going on in our lives. I don't mean to make this sound like there's some, you know, elite cabal doing all this. I mean, kind of sometimes feels and seems like it but, you know, maybe it's the collective, you know, sort of, subconscious that's leading this thing. But whatever it is, certainly, it takes individuals breaking free and setting up their own lives and maybe creating a little bit more of a zoo and a little bit less of a factory farm for themselves.

Katie: I really love that analogy. And I'd never thought of it in that sense before as humans, kind of, being on a farm. But it makes sense. And when you word it like that, I think of all the things we essentially do live in a type of a cage with artificial light, artificial substances that we're not used to interacting with. We've all heard those stats, probably about indoor air being even more toxic than outdoor air, in most cases.

Daniel: Like 95%.

Katie: Yeah. And so where we've made these... Actually in that analogy feels very much like a farm settled that we live in, eating this kind of fake diet, watching these big screens to stay entertained.

Daniel: Correct. Screens that now have cameras in them, you know?

Katie: Yeah, I also think it's funny that putting listening devices in our own homes to make our lives easier.
Daniel: Hooked up to supercomputers that spy on us, so that they can offer us more opportunities to get deeper and trapped into the farm. Right? We have the opportunity to walk away at any time. We just won't. And when somebody does, it looks like that show Alone and we're like, "Oh my God, how do they did it?" You know, I often say to people imagine for a second all the walls were transparent and the electricity and your walls was visible, then you would see you live in an electrical cage. If you have lights in your ceiling and lights, you know, on the wall, and lights in the floor, and plugs everywhere, like, hey, you're inside of a box of electricity.

And when you look at night maps of the world, like, a night map of America, a night map of North America, a night map zoomed out to the whole planet, and you see all that electrical grid lit up at night, that's the cage we've built for ourselves, and we all live inside of it. And when we leave it, we bring enough stuff to look like an astronaut. We go into the environment in big boots and big packs full of stuff, GPS to make sure we can get back to the cage on time, right, sat phones, and all these kind of gear because we're going into this foreign hostile environment, which is actually our home. It's actually our home. So we've over the course... It's been a 10,000-year project, this thing we call agriculture. And over the course of that 10,000 years, but in particular, in the last 150, we have gone from wolves to poodles.

Katie: And to build on that analogy, you're right, I don't think my dog would survive very long in the wild, nor would probably most farm animals if they were just sent back into nature. So, as humans who have been domesticated, living in these little farm boxes, how do we start to get off of the farm? How do we start to break that cycle in practical ways? Because I would guess for most people, that would be a big jump to just undomesticate all at once. So what are some of the steps to doing that?

Daniel: Yeah, and keep in mind that your golden doodle couldn't really turn back into a wolf. So it's not really like a plausible road back, right? It would take many, many generations to become something that could live that way again. So, when we watch a show, like "Alone," we see like a jump, like you said, that's too extreme for most of us to make, myself included. So, I think of it it's like a multi-generational thing. So I think the way back is, piece by piece, each one of us following our interests and passions into traditional or primitive or ancestral skill sets that get us excited, as hobbies, and as practices so that we can carry them forward to the next generation.

So, let me give an example. Like, I have good friends... I think you've had Arthur Haines on the show. He likes to tend hides, a passion of his. That's not a passion of mine. I'm not interested in it. I hunt a lot. The hides that I end up with, I don't tend them myself. So it's not my interest. But I butcher a lot of animals and break a lot of animals down. You know, that's a passion of mine. So, we're doing different things. And each one of us, it's like the book "Fahrenheit 454," if you remember that kind of, you know, we get a lot of lip service to Orwell 1984 and to "Brave New World" by Huxley, but "Fahrenheit 454" is an interesting one because the books all get burned. And towards the end, it's revealed that all these different individuals, each one's entrusted with memorizing a book, so that that information can be brought forward because all the books are being burned,
right? Similarly, it's like, if you have one skill that you practice, it could be gardening, right? It could be actually growing one single individual plant. It could be any number of things that you do that connects you back to nature, as long as we're all kind of following a passion that brings us back to the natural world or many of us are, then collectively, we're keeping some of this stuff alive because this generation is not gonna do it. We're not going back in this generation. There's no way and neither probably is the next one.

So to me, it's more about carrying these things forward because if we lose these things, that's where we have almost no hope of that sovereignty again. For me, I've taken up the practice of hunting and gathering. That's my way. It's not for everybody, you know, but I hunt all of our meat and fish all of our meat, and I forge a good deal of our medicine and of our plant food and our mushrooms and things like that, not exclusively, but I do a lot of it. And those practices for me are fun and exciting. So I don't do them because I feel like a duty. I do them as a practice because I like to in this way that some people like to do yoga or some people like to play golf. So that's my practice.

And so I have the rest of my life, you know, paying my bills and showing up for work on time and doing all those kind of things. But my sort of hobby and now my work as well because I make a TV show called "WildFed" and a podcast called "WildFed" about this. I hunt and gather and that has connected me so deeply, not just to nature in a vague esoteric sense, but to the actual individuals that I eat as food. So that for me has been tremendous. And I think food is one of the best ways for people to reconnect. So it could be as simple as learning a single plant off your lawn that you can make into tea or it could be as complex as, you know, hunting deer and, you know, feeding it to your family. It's sort of like whatever works for you. But I think that it would be really wise for people today to have a connection to nature. And I say that because we're trending towards something called transhumanism, which is a kind of a cult religion, that a lot of us don't realize this has infused our lives, this idea of technology as our savior and our salvation. And it's happening and it's playing out right in front of us. And we don't realize that we're sort of supporting it by living in and amongst it. So when we start to develop relationships with nature, it's like we find something real again, something wholesome again, and something that is true.

And that tends to build on itself because people go, "Whoa, I really like how I felt after that weekend in nature or I really like how I felt after that plant walk or after I harvested that mushroom or whatever it is." So, for me, it's one thing to recreate a natural lifestyle in the domesticated world. That's a good thing to do. It's like a bio-hack. It's like how do I hunt and gather at the health food store and at the supermarket? That's good. How do I, you know, optimize the lighting in my house to be like the neat lighting outside? All that stuff is awesome to do.

But ultimately, where we really wanna get to is actually outside. So, we wanna be careful that we're not like a cow in a factory farm that's been given some astroturf and thinks that's the same as being out on the lawn. Does that make sense? And that's sort of what we do in the biohacking world sometimes where it's like, we're recreating all these things that seem like nature, oh, I do the cold plunge to, you know, recreate what it would be like to be in a natural environment. Like, that's cool but that's a cow on astroturf. So let's do that. But let's also do the real thing to get outside into nature, whatever that looks like for you.
Katie: Yeah, that makes me think of my oldest son last year went hunting with his dad and shot a deer for the first time. And it was really cool to see his kind of process happen through that and how, like... I think he even like shed tears when it first happened and like just realized the gravity of that and then that made him so much more invested in what he ate after that and he butchered it himself. He used every bone. He was so careful on how he cooked it. He didn't wanna waste anything because he now had this connection to his food.

And not that everyone is gonna necessarily go hunting but like you said, we can all learn to garden and something or learn to forage. I've never been hunting, full disclosure, myself. But I love, like, foraging and wildcrafting and gardening and I'm more of a gatherer, I guess than a hunter. But what are some other skills? There's a lot of parents listening, especially a lot of homeschool parents. And I love anything tangible I can give them to kind of integrate with... I feel like education should be an all-day everyday pursuit, not a thing we do in a school environment. So what are some of those other tangible skills that would be good starting points, maybe for families to start learning together?

Daniel: I love anything that comes out of the primitive skills world. You know, that's really fascinating to me, you know. And, you know, again, we keep joking about the show "Alone," but the people on that show have gone to, you know, study these things, these primitive skills, learning to make fire. You know, I said in the beginning of the show that when I was young, I assumed, well, we couldn't have had fire. So we must have eaten raw foods. Well, how wrong I was. I didn't know. So for people who are listening who don't know about this, our species homosapiens, we have had fire since the first homosapiens. The first homosapien had fire because homoerectus had fire and Homo habilis had fire. So, actually, before our species, older, more primitive forms of humans, Neanderthals are another example, they had fire. Our species never learned fire, we already had it. We are a species born of fire. Our species can't exist without fire. We need fire. When you look at natural people living on the landscape, hunter-gatherers, there's always fire. There's always fire. You need fire to process everything. People don't realize this today because everything they have has been processed. And they don't realize that when they flick the switch, there's a fire somewhere. It could be nuclear fission that's happening. It could be a coal-burning power plant. It could be hydroelectric. But somewhere electrical energy like fire is being created and surging through wires to you. And it's a surrogate form of fire.

So, making fire is a fantastic one, learning to forage, a fantastic one, learning just to wildcraft some herbs or even, like I said, one plant is a really good thing to do. But ultimately, for me, I think just getting outside, taking your shoes off and taking a walk in the woods is enough for some people, just to get connected again to the natural world, but certainly, anything that teaches you about how human beings used to live is so empowering because I believe that there's a fundamental anxiety in modern humans that's the result of not knowing how to live on their landscape. So there's a paranoia. That's why these shows are so popular because there's a paranoia that you could somehow be stranded and not know what to do and you'll die because you don't
know your own environment anymore, right? That's pretty wild to think about that we've gotten to that place. So anything that starts to touch you back into that, I think is just fantastic.

Katie: I love that. And that's something we've talked about with our kids as they get older, maybe like around 16, if there's a way to create an experience, whether it's camping or some type of survival experience, where they could learn a lot of these skills because I also think some of those things were always taught throughout society. And also we're attached to some kind of, like, rite of passage or, like, transition into adulthood. And we've lost that as well, which has its own host of psychological effects there. But I love that idea of just being outside more. That's something I've set on here for a long time is, as soon as possible, after waking up, just get outside in the natural light barefoot if possible, like your body needs that, we are wired to respond to light. And when we don't get enough outdoor light, it actually really changes our hormones noticeably and drastically. So I love that you brought that up.

Daniel: That first early morning blue light is pretty critical too. And, you know, I think if it's possible for people of means, you know, I'm outside right now, this porch I'm sitting on is off of my bedroom. So our bedroom's right there. And throughout the summer months and the fall the spring, there's a sense for us, like, even when we're inside, that we're a bit outside. We sort of have this... You know, and we live in Maine. So our winters are extremely harsh and cold and we're locked up for a lot of a year in the house. Now we have practices that get us outside. We ice fish, for instance, you know, things like that get us out in the cold and experiencing that environment. But we also try to create a very outdoor environment inside.

So our windows are all open and we've created an open space environment and we have plants inside that kind of transition the green space to outside. And so for those who can do those kind of things... You know, I've been laughing a lot recently because we have entered now into this COVID era where living in the country is now considered posh again. So if you look at, again, this is like the trends, right? It's like we went to veganism as a cultural trend, so now we had to go to all meat as a trend, right? We swing back and forth constantly. So what's happened, you know, is there was this idea that everything was happening in the cities. And living in the country became this... There was this backwards redneck, you know, low society kind of thing, living out there in the country, right? So everybody wanted to flood into the cities. And then several years back, I remember this moment, you probably remember the headlines where it was, "Oh, now more than 50% of the U.S. population in urban environments." So that was a big deal. Then people started to realize how much that sucks because they got locked down in those cities. And they realized there was no food and no water and no supplies and that they... You know, my wife's from Canada, and you know, in Montreal, they had an 8:00 p.m. curfew. You couldn't leave the house. You couldn't be in your car after 8:00 p.m.

People started to realize, that sucks, I wanna get back into the country. So now, all of a sudden, all the land in the country, which everybody wanted to get away from is now at a premium, and everybody's flooding back in, you know. For people who can, living outside of the urban environment is a real blessing. It's a real blessing. It's still a lot less expensive. If you can work remotely, like, why would you live in the city at this point? You know, I think for a long time, it was like, well, there's so much art, and there's so much culture, and there's all those kind of things. But also we reached a point where a lot of that stuff, it's so diluted now. And
it's so mixed up in our culture has gotten so degraded. Stuff's not even that enjoyable anymore. I think people are realizing like, "Wow, I'd rather wake up every morning to the sounds of the birds and the sun shining in my face than the sound of sirens and stale air." You know, so if you can, I'd say, you know, the number one thing is, if you're not there now, make a plan to how you can be in a more natural environment because then you don't have to try to recreate all that stuff anymore. Now you just step out your door. It's like if you can't step outside naked, are you living in the right place?

Katie: I love that. You also mentioned the idea of when we can't fully hunt and gather in the modern world, doing things that at least can bring some of the benefits of hunting and gathering in the modern environment that we have and also how many of the things we buy in a store are really just the same species. So what are some tips for branching out beyond that and mimicking more of that natural hunter-gatherer and more nutrient-dense diet with a modern food supply?

Daniel: One thing that's helpful is to start to ask yourself, what are the actual wild foods that are still in our food supply? So, those might be things like wild blueberries, which you can still find in the frozen food section of most supermarkets. You know, foods like Brazil nuts, which really aren't economical to farm are still wild crops. So that's kind of interesting. A lot of wild seafood and a lot of wild ocean foods are still wild, right? So making that distinction and choosing wild ingredients, I think, is really awesome.

There's plants that are domesticated but are so close to wild that they can still, you know, survive in the wild environment, like asparagus would be a good example of that. You know, I see wild asparagus from time to time just here in my neighborhood. It grows... It's so close that what we have in the supermarket is basically a wild food. So, when we can select foods like that, in our supermarket, that's really helpful. When we're looking at varieties of things. So, lettuce is a great example. I've got these lettuce plants, wild ones in my yard here. And when I showed them to people, they just have no idea that that's a lettuce. And it's like, "Yeah, that's where lettuce comes from." So, when you go and you look at lettuces in the supermarket, you got the range, right from, let's say, the iceberg lettuce, which, you know, you can tear a leaf off and see through it. And they range up to things like okay, maybe then romaine, which would be a little bit better, more nutritious than the iceberg but still of a pretty pale and flavorless lettuce. But then you start to get into like a red leaf or oak lettuce. And red leaf lettuce would be like bitter. You start to really taste the compounds that would be in the wild plant. When you make those choices for things that have more bitterness, for instance, now you're getting towards foods that are closer to the wild progenitor and provide you with some of those phytochemicals that you actually need to be healthy, some of that medicine.

So it's avoiding the really flavorless stuff and developing a taste for bitterness would be a really good idea for most people. There's a fantastic book by a woman named Jo Robinson's called "Eating on the Wild Side." And I don't agree with entirely the analysis, but I really like the book. She looks at wild plants and then the domestic plants and then she sort of goes, what's the closest domestic version of that that you can get?
Similarly, I'd say if you can get to the farmers' market, whenever possible, you know, instead of the supermarket, you start to get access to still domestic plants but varieties of things that you wouldn't see in the supermarket because they're not so commercially viable. They don't last a long time on a shelf, for instance. So you might find varieties of apples you've never seen or varieties of squashes you've never seen. So getting into some of that's really smart.

Making sure you're eating bright-colored foods, heavily pigmented things. We're in the berry season right now. My wife and I, yesterday were harvesting shadbush, some people call it serviceberry. And I have this sort of theory going, I have no way to really validate this. I'm not, you know, working in a laboratory or anything. But I kind of believe that when... Because for me here, the first fruit of the year that we have is our wild strawberry. It's red. And then slowly, we start to get other stuff, it like unfolds very slowly, we start to get into our raspberries, and then our blueberries, and our shadbush berries and blackberries, and the color start changing of these fruits. Well, fruits like those berries are very delicate tissues and they're trying to survive an intense UV sunlight. So they're having to produce chemicals that protect them from the sun. But a strawberry has to protect itself from the springtime sun, whereas a blueberry has to protect itself from mid-summer sun. And then let's say a chokecherry, more getting towards late summer sun, maybe an autumn olive has to survive the fall sun.

So I think of berries as having exactly the right sunblock that we need for that time of year when they're right in season, right? So I'm eating the fresh fruits that are in season with bright colors as the season unfolds because they provide me with those antioxidants that are just right for that time of year. So that kind of thing is crucial. I'm sure you've talked endlessly here on the show but it's like animals that are eating their natural diet. So a cow that's eating grass versus a cow that's eating corn, a chicken that's free-ranging that can eat insects, instead of one that's just being fed grains. So animals that are eating their biologically appropriate diet, that's really important.

One that we're getting more hip to now in our culture because we've been so microphobic for so long, is there's more and more availability of good quality and varieties of mushrooms. So, having access to... And in most towns, now you've got somebody who's growing culinary mushrooms or you've got places that are selling them, like supermarkets are starting to sell them more and more. Having a variety of fungi in your life is really, really important. These are cancer-protective for us. They're adaptogenic for us and they modulate our immune system. And when you look back through time, you know, Otzi the Iceman who was the ice mummy 5000-year-old ice mummy discovered in the Alps, it's like he had two types of fungi with him, cut up in dried and cubes and strung on a necklace. I think that's so interesting. You know, this is ancient for us, but we gave it up for a long time. So we need to have a good variety of mushrooms in our diet.

Also playing with any kind of herbalism, whether that's tinctures or teas or even using good spices, so good quality spices, from black pepper, to cumin, to cilantro, to oregano, whatever it is, those are very close to wild plants. And those intense flavors are nutrients. They're not just flavors, those flavors that... They always turn out that those flavors are antioxidant. Those flavors turn out to be immunoprotective or anti-cancer or whatever it is, anti-mutagenic. So anti-microbial, anti-fungi, whatever it is.
So, having a good variety of herbs in our diet and spices is also really helpful. So the more of those kinds of things we do, the more variety of foods we eat. And probably the biggest takeaway from this for people is I want you to think about each thing you eat as a creature. It's a creature. Black pepper, corn, right, is a fruit. It comes from a plant. When you eat black pepper, you're eating that plant. You're eating the body parts of that plant, that's a species, right? So when you look at your diet, instead of thinking what food you eat, it's like, "Who am I eating? Who am I eating? And then how many different who's am I eating?"

Because a hunter-gatherer who... You know, and why we keep looking at hunter-gatherers, it's like, well, one thing is that they don't suffer from the kinds of diseases we do. They certainly deal... Hunter-gatherers through time have dealt with injury, right, environmental issues, parasite loads, those kind of things, but they don't deal with cancer and heart disease and all these kind of modern diseases that we're afflicted with, diabetes. They don't have that. They eat, you know, 150 to 300 different species a year. So it'd be really smart for people to think about getting variety because it helps you cover all your bases.

Katie: And I love all that advice, especially about the different types of nutrient-dense foods. It also brings up the question of another thing that's become trendy recently, which is the idea of the carnivore diet and excluding all plant foods. So we talked about veganism and excluding animal foods. I'm curious what your take is on this kind of surge in popularity around the carnivore diet and if you think that is healthy or sustainable.

Daniel: No, I think it's a fad. I mean, there's no question. It's a fad. I mean, how could it not be? There's nowhere in the world where we see that this diet ever has existed anywhere in history. So I say the same thing to vegans. What I'm saying right now applies to veganism and it applies to carnivore diets. If you cannot show anywhere in the world where any person... So here's what both of these diets would need to show in order to have any kind of real clout. Now, this is not to say that either of those diets aren't therapeutic.

So, for instance, you got characters like Jordan Peterson out there who's saying, "Hey, this diet's cured me of..." He's on the carnivore diet. "This diet's cured me of autoimmune problems." I wouldn't dispute that. That's a therapeutic use, okay? There are people who decide to blast themselves with gamma radiation as a therapy for cancer, right? It's probably not advisable to subject yourself to radiation. But hey, it's a therapy. Some people choose that therapy, right?

When you look at some of the things that we do, it's like if somebody had really bad gangrene, it's like, hey, I wouldn't recommend normally amputating your arm but if that's a therapy that will keep you alive, I understand it. So, if a carnivore diet or a vegan diet is being used therapeutically, that's one thing. But when we look at it as a diet, my old thing I used to do this on stage all the time, because there was so many vegans, it's so much less common now, but it's so many vegans. And I would say, "Hey, put your hand up if you know anyone who's a vegan?" And it's like the whole audience is like this, and then I go, okay, but only leave your hand up if you know somebody has been vegan for more than five years. And then it's just like, get half the
hands come down. And then I go 10 years, now there's only a couple hands up, 20 years, 30 years, eventually, there's no hands left up.

So I'll go, "So you're telling me that nobody knows anybody who's been a vegan their whole life?" And then does anybody know anybody who has been a vegan their whole life and met somebody else who has been a vegan their whole life and then had kids with that person and that kid was a vegan, and then that kid lived his whole life, and we know that that was healthy? Oh, no, we don't. And we don't have that for the carnivore diet? Therefore, there's no studies, there's no population we can look at. This has never been tested.

And what I find fascinating, that means it's an experiment, and any experiment's worth doing. But what I think is weird is both proponents, vegan and carnivore diet, people tend to say that everybody should just do this. We should all adopt it. It's like, oh, we should all adopt a diet that no one's ever tried anywhere in the 300,000 years there's been homosapiens because you go up to the Arctic, where people have very little access to plant foods throughout most of the year. Are they on a carnivore diet? No way.

Can you imagine being a human being, right, trying to survive in nature, and you come across a berry patch, like ripe, juicy blueberries? You know, like, "No, I don't eat those there. I only eat animal foods." It's just absurd. That's so absurd to me. Human beings have been using plants in such an integrated way through all of human history, the idea that we have... There's a reason we like the taste of sugar because we're meant to seek it out in nature. There's a reason that, you know, there's these great studies on the Hadza where in Africa, a hunter-gatherer group where they have men and women rate their favorite foods. And it's really interesting to see that women rate berries amongst their favorite foods because women through time did most of the gathering and they fell in love with fruits. The idea that we were just like, "Oh, no, it's bad for you now. We just realized that the other day. It turns out it's not good for you." This makes no sense at all.

You look at people in the Arctic when they kill a caribou, what do they do? They cut open the stomach and eat all of the plant contents and the lichen contents from inside the stomach half-digested. That's how bad they want plants. So, you know, I just don't see... This makes no sense to me at all. And we'll look back on it and it'll seem like... It's like, you know, those old machines that people try to lose weight with was like a strap that went around your waist and jiggle. It's like that. Like, it's like come on, man. It's like that stuff is... I just sound like Joe Biden there. Come on, man. That's just silly. It's a fad. And eventually, we'll get past it.

And eventually, what will happen is the vegan diet and the carnivore diet will be like, "Oh, I get it, now. The omnivore diet, oh, I see." And we're gonna look... And eventually, it's like, it'll look like European Mediterranean type diets or whatever, where it's like a balanced amount of both things on your plate is obvious. And I say that with full respect for my friends who are carnivore diet people and vegan people, but it's like, it's just silly viewed through the lens of anthropology. I mean, what a joke, you know.
Katie: It will be funny when that comes full circle for sure.

This podcast is brought to you by Beekeeper's Naturals, my source for bee powered products. I love bees and the many benefits of all their amazing compounds since learning how to keep bees and be a beekeeper as a kid. And I was so excited to find a company that is just as passionate about supporting bees and sharing the benefits of their amazing products as I am. Their propolis spray is a go-to in my house. If you're not familiar with propolis, it's a really cool substance that the bees make to keep the hive sterile and safe and to protect it from pathogens and invaders. And this became part of the beekeepers family when my friend and Beekeeper's Naturals founder Carly Stein was inspired to reinvent the medicine cabinet. She discovered propolis, which is like I said a powerful ingredient that bees use to protect their hive from germs. She had struggled with low immunity her whole life and propolis was the first thing that actually made her feel like her health was in her own hands and that experience inspired her to tackle modern health issues from stress-based low immunity to brain fog to energy through ingredients found in nature and found with the bees. This is a go-to in our house, we use it almost daily and they have other amazing products as well including some that give me a big boost of energy like B.LXR and ones my kids loved like B.powered which has a mixture of all kinds of beneficial bee ingredients from bee pollen to honey and even royal jelly. There is an exclusive offer just for you for listening. Beekeeper's Naturals has created a discount, if you go to beekeepersnaturals.com/wellnessmama and use the code wellnessmama, you will save 20% on your first order. You can also find Beekeeper's Naturals now nationwide in 2,000 stores including Target, Whole Foods and Sprouts.

This episode is brought to you by Four Sigmatic... the mushroom superfood company I’ve been raving about for years! They have many products that have become beloved staples in our home, but a few I love most are the Lion’s Mane coffee packets for the morning, and their reishi elixir packets before bed to help with sleep. I’m also really enjoying their protein powder right now. They have a peanut butter flavor that’s delicious on its own blended with water and is packed with beneficial mushrooms. I often make a protein shake on busy mornings or after a workout and love the convenience and brain/energy boost. Check out my favorite products and all of their products by going to foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama. Use code wellnessmama to save 10%.

I also have a note from my research that you are a fan of eating some unusual critters, including insects. So I'm curious what is the most or maybe top three most unusual things you've ever consumed?

Daniel: Wow, I like to... I have... I'm one of those people who is drawn to eating the unusual. I just got back from Louisville, Kentucky. I was shooting an episode of my show. They just had the hatch of the 17-year cicadas, you know. And the idea that an insect is alive for 17 years just blows my mind. You know, this insect is born, goes underground, and then emerges the same insect alive 17 years later, transforms itself, and flies up into the trees. So we ate quite a few of those.

You know, entomophagy is something that's been practiced around the world, so transcultural, everybody does it everywhere. And I tell people like hey, instead of thinking of them as bugs, what if you thought about
them as like Earth's little machines or what if you thought of them as micro animals? Because they're animals, right? So what if you thought of them as microgame? It's like, you have big game and small game, like, okay, microgame, or like God's little machines. Like, that, you know, to me... Because there's nothing gross or dirty about insects and their texture when you cook them is so crispy and light. It's like eating Fritos or Cheetos or something like that. They're fantastic, you know, some salt and spice. I really, really like it.

So, you know, for insects, 17-year cicadas, probably one of the weirdest ones I've eaten, but I really like crickets, grasshoppers, dragonflies are one of my favorite. June bugs I really like. And I think having that kind of connection is important. It's important. We have come to think of all these things as being dirty and gross. And that means that we are less likely to wanna go in nature because that's where those things live. So just getting the F over it is so good for people to just get over that stuff because now when I walk through the field... You know, I live in a place so full of ticks, you just wouldn't imagine. I mean, I could walk you through my backyard 100 yards and you might have 35 ticks on you when you get to the other side.

And I've gotten to the point, my wife's gotten to the point where we don't even think about it until we get home that day and we pick them all off, you know, but people won't go in nature because of it. So I think it's good to confront that stuff. Something I was eating recently that I really like that's weird, I guess is the fat from behind the eyeballs of cervids. So when you butcher a deer or a moose, there's a big pad of fat behind the eyeball that you pull out. And when you eat it, the taste is like raw dough. Like, if I gave it to you in a blindfold, you'd be like, "Oh, this is bread dough that hasn't been cooked yet." And it can just be eaten raw. It's really, really nice. So, that's something unusual that I like to eat.

And then I think probably, you know, maybe bear testicle would be something unusual that I've eaten. I just think it's neat to try different things and to find out, you know, what is edible. There's a lot of things that... We don't often remember that we... The average poor person, like below poverty level person in the United States lives better than an emperor would have lived at the peak of some of the civilizations of the past. Just having... I mean, it's amazing, like a toilet running hot water, my goodness, it's like, you don't have to travel very far to find people who pour a few gallons of cold water over their head in the street in the morning, right? That's how they bathe. Like, we are so wealthy here that even our poor are doing better than kings and queens lived in the past. So, we don't realize how wasteful we've become and how many edible things we don't eat. And it's not because they're gross, sometimes it's because they just takes a little bit extra processing and we're too wealthy to wanna do that processing. So we just throw that stuff out, you know. So, some of these things, it seem weird to eat. That's good for your character I think. You know, it builds character and these are forgotten skills and they need to be, kind of, you know, remembered. Ants are another one I should say, by the way, ants are like the most citrusy, lemony, sour little things. They're a blast to eat.

Katie: Well, I'm impressed with that list. I can relate. Your first one I've had at the hands of my kids, crickets, and mealworms and super worms, and ant eggs, and probably...

Daniel: Oh, you've had ant eggs?
Katie: I have. Yeah, my kids are big into that and eating insects. They'll dare each other a lot. I've never considered or known about eating the fat pad behind the eyeballs of dears or their testicles. So those are totally new to me.

Daniel: Yeah, you know, I mean, it's interesting because insects are gonna be part of the future of the world. And sometimes when I bring it up, the conspiracy heads out there online will get all mad at me, like, you're playing into the elitist globalist agenda by eating insects. That's what they want for us. And it's like, well, yeah, I think that those kind of forces or powers or whatever you wanna call that, I think they do want that because it works really good for the human factory farm model. It's really cheap. When you look at cities throughout history, the problem with city-states and what civilized means is it means you're part of a city-state. City-states always have to go out and conquer because you can't produce the food inside the city. There's no way to produce it. So they always have to go out of the city to get the resources. That's why, like, you know, that whole thing of pastoring animals and regenerative agriculture, how do you sell that to people living in the city who don't even know what a pasture is, right? But what's interesting about insects is they can be produced inside the city. You could have one skyscraper in the city producing protein for huge, vast swaths of the population. So it probably will become more common to people. But that's how I do it. You know, I don't do it as an environmentalist thing. I do it as I wanna know more species, and the most intimate way I can know them is to eat them.

Katie: I love that. It's a good challenge and thought experiment for all of us listening. As we get toward the end of time, a few questions I love to ask. The first being is what you would consider kind of your 80/20 of most impactful habits, rituals, things that you do on a regular basis that have the biggest impact on your life.

Daniel: That's a good question. When I get up in the morning, I make my bed. And I think it's, like, really important to have an immediate success, something checked off your list, first thing that you do. So, for me, I, like, rearrange my bed because I wanna get up in the morning and feel like I'm already winning that day. You know, like, if I get up and I do that, it's like, great, check that one off my list, you know. Now, I know I'm gonna get my outside time and my workout. I'm gonna do all those things because I'm already on the roll, you know. So, for me, that's really, really impactful.

Man, anything that I do with wild foods, like, when I look at what I do with butchering animals and processing my own food, I can afford to buy the stuff. So that's not why I'm doing it. I'm not doing it because I need to, to sustain my life. I don't need to do that. I put in that work and that labor because I found that I need meaningful work in my life. And a lot of the work we do, like, social media, for instance, this, sort of, you know, we all do it but it's not that meaningful to me. So, doing things that feel like they connect me back to the lineage of human beings, man, that stuff is really, really critical.
I'd say another one is my sex life with my wife. Real intimacy, where you go past having things that are not just physical. They might look physical if you're watching it from the outside, but where you have true vulnerability and emotional connection with another human being because being alone in this world is a really scary thing. Again, that show, "Alone," it's such an unrealistic thing. That's not how human beings live in nature. They don't live alone. They live in groups of 30 to 50 people, it's called a foraging group, right? What we're headed towards right now is a world where people are all in little individual pods with their own little individual feed, and their own individual, you know, on-demand dopamine switch for whatever they want. And that is so isolating.

So having a way of plugging back in with another person into the divine, to me, without that, oh, my wife has just gone for three weeks, quarantined in Canada, that was brutal. It was like alone. So, I know, these probably aren't the things that, you know, you're looking for but, like, honestly, that, to me, is more important than food, more important than the, you know, what kind of nutrients am I getting today? It's like making sure that I have a connection with her to something deeper and more divine.

Katie: Yeah, and I mean, certainly this past year has really illustrated that. But that's another thing we've lost in modern society is that more one-on-one or small group human connection and interaction. We have more fake connectivity, but not actual in-person interactions. And I hope that maybe this past year has shown us how much we need that and that we're gonna start seeing a resurgence in that. Another question I love to ask is if there's a book or a number of books that have had a profound impact on your life, and if so, what they are and why?

Daniel: There's a lot of books I have. But I wanna bring up one book, in particular, that was transitional for me because we talked about veganism before and that was... What really shook me out and helped me understand that I had been going down the wrong path was "Nutrition and Physical Degeneration" by Weston Price. That book helped me to understand that I could use anthropology as the lens through which to look at diet. And once you learn that, you don't have to pay attention anymore about to any of this diet fad stuff. I'm sort of zoomed out of that now. I don't care what the... I always joke like, are eggs good for you or bad for you now? Let's wait a week. We'll find out. It's the opposite. I've watched eggs go from good to bad 72 times since I got into nutrition. It's insane. It can't be true. How can it be good and then bad and then good and then bad? That doesn't make any sense.

So, now, once I read that book, which was, you know, a dentist, traveling around the world in the early 1900s, looking at pre-agricultural and traditional peoples, and looking at their diet and the impact that diet had on their teeth and skeletons, and it became very obvious to me through that book what we should be eating and what our natural diet looks like, and what the impacts of coming off that diet are. So, that book had changed my perspective on food. And for some modern context, I'll throw in one more book that had a big impact on me in the last couple of years. That's "The Fourth Turning" by Neil Howe because I found this moment in history very confusing. Like, what is going on culturally right now? And that book was written in the '90s. And it's a predictive model of cycles of socio-political and economic change that the United States goes through and has gone through since it became a country. And it's very predictive in the '90s, predicted that the years
2020 to 2030, we’re gonna be just like this. And it’s really helpful to get some perspective. So that book, very helpful to me in the last couple of years to stay sane and have a roadmap for what’s happening.

Katie: That is a new one. I’m gonna check that one out. And I’ll make sure there’s a link in the show notes. And also for anybody who is listening while doing an activity, driving, exercising, where can they find you online and I know in other media as well to keep learning from you.

Daniel: Sure. I am on Instagram at Daniel Vitalis. And then "Wild Fed," my TV show, is on the Outdoor Channel. I have a podcast by the same name, wild-fed.com is the website for all that stuff. And @wild.fed on Instagram.

Katie: Perfect. I will make sure all those links are in the show notes, you guys. You can find them on wellnessmama.fm. And thank you so much for your time today. My kids are fans of yours. It’s an honor to talk to you in person and this was such a fun conversation.

Daniel: Great. If I can ever be of any value to them, please let me know. It’s like supporting the kids is the most important thing I think. You know, so tell them I said hi, please.

Katie: I will. Thank you so much. And thanks as always to all of you guys for listening and sharing your most valuable resources, your time, energy, and attention with us today. We’re 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.