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*Forks Over Knives—  
The Cookbook*



# FOOD OVER MEDICINE

THE CONVERSATION  
THAT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE

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# DEEP-FRIED BUTTER ON A STICK AND OTHER ATROCITIES

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**GLEN MERZER:** Pam, how would you characterize the overall state of the health of Americans as a population? How sick are we?

**PAM POPPER:** Very sick and very overweight. It's far worse than most people believe.

**GM:** But aren't we living longer than before?

**PP:** We're not living longer in good health; we're living fractionally longer with diseases that compromise our quality of life and that cost us a fortune. We're living longer with diseases like diabetes and Alzheimer's, which are both seeing explosive growth in the number of diagnoses. And, in fact, we're not living that long at all; we're around thirty-sixth among nations on the longevity

charts, tied with our very poor neighbor Cuba. We're in a health crisis. We spend more money by far than any other nation on health yet we have miserable health outcomes. Some people don't perceive it that way. We have to change their minds.

**GM:** What's making Americans so sick?

**PP:** Our food. And I say that for two reasons: One, we have excellent data on populations with lower disease rates and we know that their eating patterns are different than ours. Two, we have excellent data on the rare physicians who use diet as an intervention tool, showing that when people adopt the right diet, they often eat their way out of their diseases. Diet is clearly the problem.

**GM:** Has a nation ever existed that is fatter than America today?

**PP:** Never in recorded history have we seen such obesity. We've set the record. And it's going to be tough to beat.

**GM:** There's been a lot of attention paid to obesity recently. Do you see any signs of improvement?

**PP:** It's getting worse, unfortunately. When I was doing research for *Forks Over Knives*, I was looking at obesity statistics; the statement was made in the film that 40 percent of Americans are obese. If you take a look at the website of the Centers for Disease Control, the party line is that a third of the country is obese. Well, if you take a look at how we categorize obesity and overweight conditions in our country based on body mass index charts, we're basically saying 21 to 24 percent is normal, 25 to 29 percent is overweight, 30 percent and higher is obese, and 40 percent and higher means you're morbidly obese. Well in India, 21 to 24 is overweight, not normal.<sup>1</sup> This is also the approach in Canada<sup>2</sup>

and many other countries. If you pick up the population of the United States and plop it down in the middle of India and other countries with higher standards than ours, our obesity rate would approach 60 percent.

**GM:** So there's a potential way out of the crisis. Just lower our standards a little more. Define "overweight" as "twice as fat as an obese Indian."

**PP:** It's almost unbelievable. No other population has ever had such unlimited access to so many bad foods to become this overweight. And no population has ever been as misled as ours by a perverse system of incentives in food manufacturing, the advertising industry, and the medical field. So we've eaten ourselves into the dubious distinction of being the fattest population in recorded history; now we've got to figure out how we're going to teach more than three hundred million people to eat their way out of this terrible state.

**GM:** I heard a report on NPR about the healthiest, fittest, and leanest state in America: Colorado.<sup>3</sup> The reporter went on about all the joggers, the bike paths in Boulder, and the skiing in Aspen. Then he actually said, "In fitness-crazy Colorado, the obesity rate is only 21 percent."<sup>4</sup>

**PP:** So that's only about a million people.

**GM:** Yup. That's our skinniest population. That's as good as it gets. And, credit where credit is due, only one in four children in Colorado is overweight or obese.

I've noticed that people just assume that it's normal to gain weight as you age. Friends who were 160 pounds in college hit middle age and they're 200 pounds. Is there any reason why a

fifty-year-old should weigh more than he did when he was twenty or twenty-five?

**PP:** The only reason why a fifty-year-old would weigh more than he did when he was twenty or twenty-five is that his diet and lifestyle finally caught up with him. Youth will overcome a great number of indiscretions. That's why people tend to get cancer a little later in life; it takes that long for the dietary habits to catch up. It's simply diet and lifestyle habits catching up, with the major habit being exercise, or lack thereof. I'm fifty-six years old and the vast majority of people my age are not doing the right amount of exercise; some of them don't exercise at all. Gaining weight is not a normal function of aging. There's no reason why you can't stay lean and physically active into your nineties and be healthy.

**GM:** What would you say are the leading causes of our unmatched record of obesity?

**PP:** First, there is an overall confusion about food and the way that people are taught to eat from a very early age. We have strange ideas about food in this country. One is the idea that moderation is the key to success, that you can eat almost anything you want as long as you eat it in moderation.

**GM:** I hear that a lot, though no one ever says it about hemlock.

**PP:** I attended a wedding last night and food was the topic of the table. I wasn't eating 90 percent of what they served, and the guy next to me said, "Everything in moderation is okay, so I'm just going to have a little bit of this stuff." Well, it was a little bit of a bunch of horrible things that added up to probably 2,500 calories, 2,000 of them from fat. You know, that's not moderation—that's

a diet that kills people. We have a lot of misbegotten ideas about food, many of which come from the government, national health organizations like the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, and other professional groups.

Another part of it is the availability of rich, inexpensive food. If you go back several hundred years, you used to have the wealthy and poor eating vastly different diets. The wealthy ate rich food with lots of calories, with the result often being health and weight problems. The poor peasants couldn't afford rich food so they lived on potatoes and vegetables for most of the year. A few times a year they'd have a festival and roast a pig, but then it was back to vegetables and potatoes. The fact that they didn't have the economic wherewithal to eat as the wealthy ate was protective for them; it kept them leaner and healthier than the wealthy. Today, most Americans can afford to eat meat and animal foods—things that used to be reserved for the wealthy. They're eating all of this calorie-dense animal food and processed and packaged food, day in and day out. And it's often a lot easier and sometimes cheaper in the inner city to find Kentucky Fried Chicken or McDonald's than fresh produce, so many people find themselves almost trapped into obesity. The cost of many animal foods is effectively kept low by federal farm subsidies, so our tax dollars are being used to skew our diet in the direction of the very foods that make us sick and obese.

When you eat this calorie-dense food, as Doug Lisle says in the movie *Forks Over Knives*, "People have to overeat just to be satisfied." If I'm going to try to fill my belly with cheese and potato chips, I've got to eat four thousand calories of it to accomplish that goal. You can't eat those foods without becoming overweight because you're forced to overconsume from a caloric standpoint. That's why we have an obesity epidemic in this country. Then you add to it the sedentary lifestyle of most people, and it's no wonder we're gaining weight at an alarming rate.

**GM:** Are you forced to overeat those foods to feel full because they're deficient in fiber?

**PP:** Yes. There are two mechanisms by which people experience what we call satiety: stretch receptors and nutrient receptors. Stretch receptors in the stomach tell you that the bulk of the food that you ate is sufficient, and that's where fiber is really helpful; if you eat a bowl of lentils and rice with fourteen grams of fiber, you're going to feel full. In fact, you couldn't overeat it because if you tried to eat four bowls of it, you'd explode. On the other hand, if I'm eating calorie-dense, fiber-deficient food (such as a turkey sandwich and potato chips), in order to activate those stretch receptors, I've got to eat an enormous amount of calories. We only feel satiety when the stretch receptors and the nutrient receptors in our stomach tell us that we've had enough bulk of food and calorie concentration. So with these calorie-dense, nutrient-deficient, and fiber-deficient foods, in order to activate those stretch receptors, you've got to eat a gargantuan quantity of calories to accomplish that goal, sometimes thousands of calories in a single meal. When you take into consideration that an average adult may need only two thousand calories per day, you can see the problem. It's easy to consume half of this in one meal.

**GM:** Tell me about the nutrient receptors. How do they work?

**PP:** They tell you if the calorie density of the food is adequate. That becomes important because just as you can overeat from a caloric standpoint by eating the standard American diet with animal foods and processed foods, you can also undereat by structuring a plant-based diet the wrong way. I see this often with people coming into our classes, people who have seen various movies or read articles and decided, "I'm going to eat a lot of fruits and vegetables. In fact, I'm going to structure my entire diet around fruits

and vegetables.” So they eat fruit for breakfast, have a big salad for lunch, and a big salad for dinner. After about three days of that, they’re ready to chew their desk up at the office and can’t sleep at night from the rumbling stomach. They’re uncomfortable all the time and have a nagging hunger. Even when their stomachs are full of a pound and a half of vegetables, they have this nagging feeling of needing more food. Why? If I eat a pound and a half of vegetables, my stomach is going to be full from a bulk standpoint, but my nutrient receptors are going to say, “One hundred fifty calories? Gosh, I don’t know if we can keep this human operating for another four hours on 150 calories!” I may be full from a fiber standpoint, but I’m not doing well based on my body’s perception of the calorie density of the food. So we advise people to include a lot of grains and legumes and potatoes in their diet because they add calorie density to the meals without adding lots of fat and too many calories. Nature’s perfect plan for humans.

**GM:** So that’s the argument for having starch as a staple of the diet?

**PP:** Well, you have to. If you don’t, here’s what happens to people who try to live on fruits and vegetables. They go through what I call the “honeymoon period,” when they benefit from what they take out of the diet. When they remove animal and junk foods from their diet, they feel great. They lose weight, their skin clears up, their headaches go away, and they say, “Boy, this is the greatest thing since right turn on a red light.” However, within a few weeks they start to feel fatigued because the effect of the calorie deficiency sets in.

What a lot of people will do then is to start adding dried fruits, nuts, or oils to their diet. There are a lot of unhealthy plant-based options people choose to increase the calorie count. Over time, those people will develop health issues, generally speaking,

as much as the meat eaters will. A plant-based diet won't work effectively if you don't do it right. And just eating fruits and vegetables is one of the ways that people can mess it up for themselves and a major reason why people revert to their old eating patterns. Then they say, "Well, this diet must not work. I have to go back to what I was doing before. It may not have been the best thing based on what I read in so-and-so's book, but at least I was able to stay awake all day and I was able to sleep at night because my stomach wasn't rumbling."

**GM:** The word "starch" seems to have a lousy public relations guy. People always have terrible things to say about starch. Dieters say that they're trying to avoid starchy foods and that they gain weight whenever they eat starch. What's the deal here? How can the type of food that actually helps people lose weight and stay healthy have such a bad reputation?

**PP:** That's because there are different sorts of foods that get labeled as "starch," and because starch often travels in bad company. In other words, people slather sour cream on their baked potato or olive oil on their pasta or pesto on their rice. You walk into a Mexican restaurant and instead of having the healthy starch of beans and rice, you order refried beans with lard inside a burrito with cheese in it—a 1,500-calorie, fat-laden Mexican dish.

Let's posit a hierarchy of starch. The healthiest starch comes from whole, unprocessed foods, such as whole grains, potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, corn, and so forth. The next healthiest but suboptimal starch comes from broken grains, also known as flours. Whole wheat bread, for example, is denser and more caloric than wheat berries in their original form, but whole wheat flour itself is not inherently fatty or unhealthy. If you're trying to lose weight, staying away from broken grains is probably a good idea because broken grains are more concentrated in calories and

generally don't have as much fiber as whole grains, so they're absorbed quickly in the system. The worst starch comes in refined foods and is combined with fats and sugars in products like muffins and cake. These starchy foods will put weight on you fast, but it's largely because of the added fats and sugars. People are misunderstanding the nature and importance of starch if the word conjures in their minds the image of donuts. It should conjure the image of yams and corn and rice.

**GM:** So it's simplistic and misleading to say that carbs are fattening?

**PP:** When people tell me carbohydrates are fattening, I tell them, "You know, two billion Asians never got that memo."

**GM:** What are the foods you recommend that have sufficient calorie density that make you feel full? What are the best foods to make the staples of your diet?

**PP:** Whole grains, legumes, and starchy vegetables. More broadly, I tell people to make the staples of their diet the four food groups, which are whole grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables. We have our own little pyramid that we use here at The Wellness Forum. Beans, rice, corn, and potatoes are at the bottom of the pyramid. Then steamed and raw vegetables and big salads come next, with fruits after that. Whole grains, or premade whole grain foods like cereals and breads, are all right to eat. Everything else is either optional or a condiment.

As for high-fat plant foods—nuts, seeds, avocados, olives—use them occasionally or when they're part of a recipe, but don't overdo it; these foods are calorie-dense and full of fat. No oils, get rid of the dairy, and then, very importantly, you need to differentiate between food and a treat. I don't think you can get through to people by telling a twenty-five-year-old that she can't have

another cookie or a piece of cake for the rest of her life. Where you can gain some traction is to say, “Look, birthday parties are a good time for cake, Christmas morning is a good time for cookies, and Valentine’s Day is a good time for chocolate, but you don’t need to be eating that stuff all the time.” People end up in my office because they’re treating themselves several times a day.

**GM:** I had obese relatives who are gone now, my aunt and uncle. When I told them at the age of seventeen that I had gone vegetarian, they became terribly concerned that I wouldn’t get enough protein. They weren’t tall and must have weighed more than two hundred pounds each. Their kids were overweight, but they were worried about *me*. Usually they were on one diet or another, but they would make an exception for cake and ice cream on special occasions. And the special occasions were their birthdays, their kids’ birthdays, their kids’ spouses’ birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, Earth Day, National Organ Donor Awareness Week . . . the list went on and on.

**PP:** Right. You really have to put some common sense into this. My sister turned fifty a couple of years ago, which is a pretty big deal. We had cake and champagne, but there was no cake and champagne the next day or the next day or the next day. These have to be occasional treats; I tell people to make them situational. In other words, don’t keep this stuff around the house because they’ll call your name from the kitchen. I have no trouble staying away from cheese and animal food. But sweets, that’s a different story; they’re not as easy to resist. Not having any around is the easiest way to avoid them. If I want something sweet to eat after I get off work at ten o’clock, I’ve got bananas, plums, oranges, some apples, and some strawberries in my house. That’s it. If I want anything else, I have to get in the car and go out and get it, something I’m not going to do at ten o’clock at night. It’s a much

better plan than standing in the kitchen saying, “Huh, I could have soy ice cream or I could have some cookies or I could have a banana or an apple.” That’s a choice that puts me in a position to have to use willpower.

**GM:** I used to have a sweet tooth. From the time I was a kid, I would always have cookies and cake and ice cream in the evening. Even when I became concerned about health as a teenager and became first a vegetarian and then, close to twenty years later, a vegan, I would still have a few vegan cookies in the evening. In the summer, I would follow that up with some soy ice cream. And then it turned out that my cholesterol kept creeping up on what I thought was an excellent diet. It was embarrassing. I had already coauthored with Howard Lyman two books on diet, and yet my cholesterol was 212 and my triglycerides were 203. My doctor recommended that I consider taking a statin drug to lower my cholesterol, which would have been really embarrassing. Now, I have bad genes. There have been a lot of heart attacks in my family, which is what led me to vegetarianism at seventeen; my relatives were dropping like flies while I was growing up.

I ran into Dr. John McDougall ([www.drmcDougall.com](http://www.drmcDougall.com)) at an event and asked him why my cholesterol had gone as high as 212 and if it was just my bad genes. After all, I was on a basically low-fat, vegan diet. And he said, “Fructose.” I said, “Well, my blood sugar is fine; it’s just my cholesterol . . .” And Dr. McDougall said, “Fructose.” He’s a very efficient guy—he gave me a one-word diagnosis. It was like the “plastics” scene from *The Graduate*. I don’t know if there’s another doctor in America who would have instructed me that my problem was fructose, and certainly there isn’t another who could have helped me in just one second. Other doctors would have put me on drugs and run countless tests on me and increased my stress level. He met me at a party and said “fructose.” Arguably, I owe him my life.

I went home and Googled “fructose and cholesterol” and discovered that indeed there was a theory that there was a direct relationship.<sup>5</sup> So I experimented. For the next several weeks, instead of having for breakfast commercial, organic fruit-flavored soy yogurt, which comes sweetened with cane sugar, into which I had typically added fruits and raisins, I had oatmeal with oat bran, cut out the cookies and the soy ice cream, and cut out dried fruit. I made *absolutely no other changes*. Seven weeks later my cholesterol was 146 and my triglycerides dropped from 203 to 81. But the reason I mention this is that after I went cold turkey on the sweets for a couple months, now if I try to eat one of those cookies that I used to eat, it tastes too sweet to me. It doesn’t taste good.

**PP:** Well, you bring up a really good point, which is the neuro-adaptation of the taste buds over time. I’m the same way. I went to a wedding of a very good friend of mine. We made the cake—Wellness Forum Foods made the cake, so it was a vegan cake. I had a tiny bit of the frosting, and it was unpleasantly sweet. I ate a couple of bites of the cake without the frosting and didn’t finish it. It wasn’t because we don’t make good cakes. I mean, everybody else was licking the plate and looking around for more, so I know the cake was really good.

I really am a lot happier with fruit, even though I find I still have a bit of a sweet tooth. The evenings in particular are when I feel like I want something, but I’m just as happy with a nice crisp apple or a bowl of pineapple or strawberries. A bowl of strawberries makes me perfectly happy; I really don’t miss the other stuff. And speaking of Dr. McDougall, he often says in his lectures that humans do have a sweet tooth and nature builds in a great way to satisfy it; it’s called fruit. Go have some and you will find that you don’t have to have all this other garbage.

**GM:** Now, in my case, Pam, I more or less cut sweets cold turkey. When people have very unhealthy diets, do you find that it's more effective for them to make major dietary changes right away, just stop what they were doing before and do something radically different, or is it more effective for people to change gradually? Or does that depend on the individual?

**PP:** I think the best thing to do is make a great big leap into the land of what we call dietary excellence. There are a couple of reasons for it. The first one is that, if you want to get people to stick with this—and that's my goal; I want people to do it and keep with it for the rest of their lives—they've got to see results. You know, people read *Prevention* magazine and go to their cardiologist, who will tell them to eat more fish and eat less chicken. So they work at this, making small changes to include a little more of this food, a little less of that food. They try hard, but at the end of the day, they're in worse shape from a weight and health perspective than they were before they started. That's not much motivation to keep paying attention to diet.

**GM:** Which could be why the medical establishment often downplays the role of diet.

**PP:** Yes, because they don't see results from the minimal, half-assed dietary changes they typically recommend. So I found that when we make great big changes, we see great big results, and the motivation lasts. You give somebody some phenomenal results and you don't see them going back. They'll experiment with some junk food—I call it going off the reservation—and then they'll find out how poorly they feel eating some of this stuff. They're pretty compliant after that. If we want people to be compliant, we've got to show them great results. That only happens when they do the whole diet.

I was explaining this to somebody recently. Everywhere I go, food becomes the subject of conversation. I was at my friend's wedding, sitting at this table full of people—none of whom eat like I do—and they were all curious about the way that I eat. They were saying things like, “I cut out this and that and I haven't lost a pound.” “My cholesterol is still high.” “I still have to take blood pressure medication.” And so on. I explained to them that diet is like a combination lock. If you have to dial four numbers to open a combination lock and you dial three correctly, you don't get 75 percent of the results. You get nothing until you get that fourth number right. We have a society filled with people who are doing 75 percent of what they need to do or 50 percent of what they need to do. They don't get 50 percent or 75 percent of the results; nothing happens until they get the whole thing right.

**GM:** As with me. I was doing most everything right, but I was taking in too much sugar.

**PP:** That's why we teach dietary pattern. We really work to make people leave their old life behind and embrace dietary excellence. If we produce the changes for them that they're looking for, they'll stick with it. There's another issue, too, and it goes back to these bad foods calling their names from the kitchen. As long as the stuff is around, as long as they're teasing themselves with it every day, they're going to revert to their old ways. It's just going to go on forever. So we tell them, “Look, if you're going to do this, then let's do it. Get rid of the stuff.”

**GM:** What would you say are the most outrageous and self-destructive nutritional habits of Americans?

**PP:** Milk drinking would be right up there. All cow's milk products: cheese, butter, yogurt, cottage cheese, skim milk, all that stuff.

Call me crazy, but I find the idea of consuming another mammal's secretions kind of gross. Here's how I recommend thinking about it: all cow's milk has estrogen metabolites because it comes from lactating cows.<sup>6</sup> So the next time you're getting ready to put a slice of cheese on a sandwich, just think, "I'm really looking forward to a big slice of estrogen between my slices of bread." Next time you're getting ready to put skim milk on your cereal, say, "I'd really love to have estrogen with my Cheerios this morning." Doesn't that sound delightful?

**GM:** So how does the estrogen in cow's milk affect women who consume dairy products?

**PP:** Most breast cancers are estrogen receptor positive, so elevated blood levels of estrogen increase the risk of breast cancer. There's also another issue. Cow's milk is designed to help a calf grow to several hundred pounds within a short period of time, so cow's milk increases production of a hormone called insulin-like growth factor, or IGF-1, which helps to fuel this growth.<sup>7</sup> But dairy products also increase IGF-1 levels in humans; the dairy industry's own studies show this.<sup>8</sup> The problem is that IGF-1 is a powerful cancer promoter in humans; there are clear links between IGF-1 levels and breast, lung, colon, and prostate cancers. In fact, the link between low-fat cow's milk and prostate cancer is stronger than the link between smoking and lung cancer.<sup>9</sup>

Estrogen levels in milk increase during the cow's pregnancy. Farmers aren't supposed to milk their cows during the last two months of pregnancy, when estrogen levels are highest, but milk products still contain lots of estrogen. So that's why I'd say that consuming dairy is right up there as one of the most pernicious and dangerous dietary practices.

**GM:** What are some of the other worst practices?

**PP:** Drinking calories is another terrible dietary practice. I spoke at a large local school about improving foods in the school system. They've already made one very important advance: the kids can buy only water to drink. Water is the only drink available to them other than the milk that's unfortunately served with the lunch. The milk, of course, is a disaster, but at least if the kids want to buy something in the vending machines, it's water or nothing. And the reason that's important is that one thing all nutritionists pretty much agree upon is that liquid calories don't reduce the calories consumed in food. There are so many people consuming soft drinks, sports drinks, flavored milk, and juices—we're talking between 500 and 700 calories a day that don't reduce by a single calorie what they're consuming in solid foods. That's certainly one reason why people develop weight problems; drinking calories is a major contributor to obesity.

The other major dietary nightmares in the United States are too much protein, too much fat, and too little fiber, with animal foods a leading cause of all three problems. In the fat category, oil is a close second with the havoc it causes on the body.

I'll add one more thing that's become an issue in recent years: taking supplements instead of eating well. The justification for that approach is, "I know I don't eat well, but I'll just take some pills. That'll make up for my dietary indiscretions." Unfortunately, the pills people take depend on which practitioners they go to and which magazines they read; they're all fairly useless most of the time, but some of them can be dangerous.

I'd say that not understanding the importance of dietary pattern is the overarching issue. People think that they're going to improve their diets by eating soy twice a week. Or they read an article saying blueberries can reduce the risk of cancer, so they eat blueberries every day for six months. They end up gaining four pounds, and their health deteriorates because it turns out that neither blueberries nor any other single food can fix what's wrong

with them. It's only by changing the fundamental dietary pattern that they can fix what's wrong. Those are some of the ways in which Americans have gone astray, why they're so confused and frustrated.

**GM:** Do you see supplements as an attempt to get by with minimal changes?

**PP:** Yes. It goes along with Americans' unending quest to eat a healthier version of their bad diets. "I'm eating chicken and fish instead of beef. I'm drinking skim milk instead of whole milk. I use only organic, cold-pressed olive oil." Well, it doesn't matter what kind of oil. Again, you need to understand the dietary pattern that promotes health. It's the entire diet that the average person eats, including many of my very well-educated friends who believe they're eating healthfully. It's their entire diet that's appalling from the standpoint of both macronutrients (protein, carbohydrate, and fat) and micronutrients (vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals).

**GM:** I read about a study showing that 90 percent of Americans believe they eat a healthy diet.

**PP:** Yeah. Isn't that amazing? Then it must be just the other 10 percent responsible for the 40 percent obesity rate.

**GM:** Don't you hate it when a small minority ruins it for everyone else?

**PP:** People have the idea that they can eat whatever they want because it tastes good; they have no concept of the relationship between diet and human health. You see this in young people, too. Young people especially assume that they're invincible.

They think they can eat, drink, and be merry, with no price to pay. And then one day, there is. They go to the doctor and realize they've gained twenty or thirty or fifty pounds, and their cholesterol is out of control. There's a complete disregard, even in the medical community, for the idea that what goes into your mouth influences your health. That's the root of the problem.

**GM:** I've got a candidate for the worst food out there. I saw this on a Sunday morning news show. At the Iowa State Fair, the big hit this year was deep-fried butter.

**PP:** Deep-fried butter?

**GM:** On a stick. Four ounces of butter deep-fried, dipped in honey, and topped with a sugary glaze.

**PP:** Does it come with an angioplasty?

**GM:** The reporter, Jake Tapper, who's an intelligent guy, took a bite out of it on television, as if he thought it was amusing. He was showing us he was a good sport, a man of the people. I'll bet he has a great life as a major media figure in Washington, and I'm sure he'd like to attend his children's weddings one day, but there he was, eating deep-fried, sugar-glazed butter. Now, if he was doing a story on crystal meth being all the rage in Iowa, I don't think he'd sample it.

**PP:** That's what I'm saying. It's this eat, drink, and be merry approach to foods that are poisons that is truly deadly.

**GM:** I'm curious what first step you ask people to take to begin their dietary transformations. When people join The Wellness Forum and they are obese and on cholesterol medication, having a kitchen

loaded with meat, cheese, soda pop, cookies, and chips, do you tell them to just go home and throw everything out?

**PP:** I tell them to take it to a church or food bank. There are people who are hungry and are worried not about cardiovascular disease and diabetes but about feeding their kids. So the best gift you can make is to take that food that doesn't serve you anymore and give it to people who desperately need food tonight. Then go buy the right stuff. We have to get over some of the mental images associated with this: I spent all this money on food and don't want to throw it out or give it away! Well, if you end up having a heart attack tomorrow, are you going to say, "Hey, I'm so glad I ate that bacon and got my money's worth. Sure, I had a heart attack, but I didn't waste a nickel!" Nobody ever sits in my office as a result of making bad choices and ending up in a bad health situation and says, "Yeah, I know I've got this breast cancer, lupus, or diabetes now, but it was so worth it because all that animal food and processed food was delicious." Get the stuff out of your house. Leave it behind. Leave your old life behind and join me. Let me take your hand and take a giant leap over to where the healthy people live.

If I could find a way to make people understand this quickly and easily, I know I'd be a billionaire. If I could develop a pill where people could live inside my body for just twenty-four hours and then go back to their own, we'd have no trouble convincing people to eat like this because they would feel how great it is to feel alive and energetic and to be able to run around eighteen hours a day. I want them to experience that. That's the only way we're going to get compliance. That's the only way people are going to get with the program.



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