

Improving Life Quality Through Plant-rich Recipes with Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi

Julia Chebotar 00:00

To spice up your life with me Health Chef Julia, as I set out on the journey of What is Healthy. In each episode, we'll explore the different meanings of healthy for some healthy means indulging in something decadent and delicious. For others. It's a mental health day and a good workout. There's more to health than just food. It's about living well, enjoying your life and having fun. Having you heard redheads do it best. Come with me, I will find out just what healthy is. Welcome to a new episode of What is Healthy? podcast, where we share every hack to get healthier and a more sustainable lifestyle. I'm Chef Julia and today we'll be talking to Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi. Did I get that right?

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 00:44

Yeah, did actually really, really nice try. Thank you. Thank you.

Julia Chebotar 00:49

Thank you so much for being on today. I know you had a crazy workday in hospitals. So thank you very much for spending time with me today.

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 00:57

Of course. Thanks for having me.

Julia Chebotar 01:00

Would you please introduce yourself to the audience and tell them who you are? And then I'll go into grilling you with all the questions that I have,

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 01:09

of course. So like you mentioned, my name is Adele. My last name is your memory, which is really long, but a lot of people but my patients call me Dr. Adel, and his like my Instagram is Dr. Adel, so I'm very comfortable with just like being called at Dell. I'm as chief resident and in ophthalmology department at UC San Diego School of Medicine, and I'm a huge advocate for healthy and healthy lifestyle, including like fitness, healthy eating mainly, and I'm that kind of my true passion.

Julia Chebotar 01:44

I love it. How did you get into ophthalmology?

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 01:47

Oh, that's a great question. So I grew up as an artist, and when I was a kid, and I also had this passion of helping people, so and my, I grew up in a family with a lot of doctors, I really knew that early on, I knew that I really want to be a doctor and to be able to help people more. But ever since I went to medical school, I was looking for a specialty, which is more visual so that I can use my artistic skills. So the moment I rotated in ophthalmology, it's it's like a very visual subspecialty. And the impact you make in people's life. I mean, like vision is one of the most senses of all. So I mean, it's very gratifying to be able to help people see better and improve their quality of life. So I just like I was drawn to

ophthalmology, very immediately when I rotated and then I'm so grateful. And if I go back, I would make the same decision.

Julia Chebotar 02:46

Oh, I love that. That is like the happiest because people are always either love what they do or hate it. So it's really nice to hear when someone's like very passionate about it, and would go back and do it all over again.

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 02:59

Yeah, I agree with you. I kind of feel like you know, it's like very cliché to say, you know, if you love what you do, then you don't feel like working with for me, it's like very true, true, true story. I really love what I do.

Julia Chebotar 03:11

What are your goals and dreams for the future in your career? Because I see on your Instagram, you say that like your eye surgeon and training?

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 03:19

Oh, yeah. So I am a senior resident. So I have few more months to graduate. And I just matched into a fellowship program. So I will be continuing my education. Congratulations. Thank you. I'll be continuing my education as a glaucoma fellow. And I'll stay in San Diego, which is something I'm very excited about. So hopefully, I'll continue my education as an ai, ai surgeon and o'clock homos sub specialist. And I do have passion for education too. So I really love teaching people teaching patients so I think I would love to stay in academia and I also have passion for research. So I think academia is for me, the my, where I see myself in future.

04:05

I love that.

Julia Chebotar 04:05

Is it true? what they say about San Diego isn't like the happiest place in the US and they say that it's the least prescribed anxiety and depression medication area.

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 04:15

I would I would agree. I've never heard about the second like I mean, like it is the America's finest city for sure. It's like really a happy place. But I've never heard the second statement, but I can I can 100% accept that that that can be true because it's like you get 200 Sun sunshine like pretty much all year round. And like beach you're surrounded by so many beautiful beaches and people are really really nice here like living here is very easy and like there's not much traffic and it's just like it's really a happy place to be.

Julia Chebotar 04:49

Yeah, I love that. Now we all need to move to San Diego. So I started this podcast because I was you know there's so many health focused influencers and Doctors and nutritionists out there in the social

media world. And we're constantly being pushed and told or suggested, to, you know, do this or eat that or do this diet versus that. And I think that like, everybody has a different school of thought on health. So I wanted to reach out to all sorts of different people who are in the health space, and ask them what is healthy for you.

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 05:28

That's actually very interesting. And thanks for doing it. So I agree with you. It's like, it's so much information out there is like a crazy word. It's great that we have all this information. But it's, I guess, can be really confusing for people like what is right and wrong, like some people say, this is right. And then the next moment you open another person's account, and you figure Oh, this is, like, they're saying that completely opposite thing is like, it can be really, really confusing. I can tell you a little bit about my story. So I have always had this true passion for nutrition, food and nutrition science ever since I was younger, like a kid, or like I was a teenager. And I can, I can probably tell you that, you know, I was mainly vegetable like plant dominant, maybe flexitarian. But I was I was like, I ate everything. I just like I was trying to, you know, eat more vegetables and fruits. I mean, like, it's a no brainer, everyone knows that, you know that more vegetables and fruits you eat, it's like, it's that the healthier you become. So I that's kind of where I was when I was like younger, I thought that I'm you know, I'm trying to do something good for my body, you know, exercising, eating healthy, eating more vegetables. But then I had this period before I started my residency in ophthalmology, where I already matched, and I knew where I will be the next year, but I had this like, couple months, that I could do whatever I want. And because I always wanted to, I like I was always on the quest to find like, what is the healthiest diets for human beings. And I forgot to mention that, you know, because of my passion, I used to study a lot of nutrition, like nutrition is not taught that much in medical school, but I did a lot of self study, because just I just liked it. But then it was not until a couple years ago, before I started my residency that, you know, I was like, you know, I have to dig into this topic more with all the new you know, informations and like, see what is the healthiest diet for a hip for human being. So I got to know a lot of doctors who are advocates for plant based diet who are treating patients on a plant based diet who reversing a lot of our chronic conditions like heart disease, obesity, hypertension, so I got really interested that was something that I never heard of, because in medical school, it's all about like medicine, you know, do this injection use this oil, man use this tablet. So that's what we were taught. Long story short, I spent all that time reading every book, every article, like do as much research as I can I and I kind of came into conclusion that really a plant based predominantly plant based diet is the way to go. And yeah, so so that is that is basically how I got into this and I've been on I mean, like we call it vegan but I'm pretty sure you know that major difference between being vegan and being a plant based diet. My husband and I are both and my life my brother too. We are all the weekend but we don't we never call herself vegan because you know, you can't be vegan, but you can be eating Oreos and chips and soda and like Ella are so weird. I don't I never buy soda, you know, I don't like eating chips because it has so much saturated fat and it's vegan, but it's not healthy. So basically this is and I can tell you that in I like I was I told you a little bit briefly about my childhood and my like, my younger ages in medical school, that I thought I'm like, you know, I'm fit. I'm trying to eat healthy. But it was not until when I decided to be, you know, on a whole food plant based diet per se that I had the discipline of cutting out a lot of things. And it was not until now like then that I realized really. We I used that even even if I was interested in healthy eating. I was eating so much junk. You know, I can make you some examples. So every day we walk in the hospital, and there's always an event or like it's someone's

retiring or it's a birthday, it's Fourth of July. It's like it's Friday. There's always a lot of like in our resume or employee lounge. Or kitchens, there's always a big cake, a lot of chocolates, a lot of donuts, a lot of a lot of things that I am pretty sure like 100% 10 years ago, I would definitely eat them not even not even realizing that i'm used like eating them every day. And our like our lounges or food with like snacks, a lot of processed food that I used to eat, thinking, you know, oh, this is like, okay, that's okay, I'm eating less. But I just realized that it's just now after you know, the being disciplined, I kind of grew out of snacking on a lot of packaged food, processed food. And I just walk in the grocery stores just like walking fast, a lot of aisles and just going straight to the aisle with like, all the colorful, colorful vegetables, fruits, and all those things that have are more nutritionally good for. So that's basically how I got into this. And I've never been healthier, happier than this. I'm a huge advocate to all my colleagues, all my patients, I spend extra extra time to, you know, educate my patients about their condition, what they can do for themselves isn't just not just their eye condition they can, what they can do to treat or reverse a lot of the chronic conditions that they suffer from.

Julia Chebotar 11:29

But like, I feel like what you said modern medicine really gives you a pill for a to subdue the symptoms instead of like getting to the root cause which could probably be

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 11:40

solved through diet. That is 100% true.

Julia Chebotar 11:43

It's actually funny that you met. So my stepfather We own a vegan restaurant in New York City. So if you're ever in New York, please, that's so cool. I would love that. But it all started because his mom was diagnosed with lymphoma in the early 90s. And they had just come to America. So and he was a psychologist. So he quit his job and moved her to the Berkshires to the Kushi Institute, which is like a fully macrobiotic vegan Institute. And they went macro and vegan for like three or four months, like live there, everything. And she went into remission. And she lived for five more years just from changing her diet completely. So I'm a huge proponent of that. I don't like to put labels on what I am, because I feel like there's stigma and judgment or I don't want to feel like I'm restricting anyone to be around like so. I will eat to try but predominantly, I'm just like you like mostly plant based.

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 12:43

I love I love to hear like that story is really amazing. Yeah. Yeah, it's

Julia Chebotar 12:49

great. It's a great story. And then when she passed, he opened the restaurant in her memory. So the restaurants been there now since 2001. And we're one of like the first vegan restaurants in New York.

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 13:00

Oh, that's so cool. so neat.

Julia Chebotar 13:03

How so? You said that you started this plant based diet in your residence when you started residency?
So yeah,

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 13:10

exactly. Right before I started residency, so I've been on I've been on a vegan diet close to four years now.

13:18

Well, that's why you look so good.

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 13:21

Thank you.

Julia Chebotar 13:22

Do you see a difference in food from where are you from Iran?

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 13:26

I was born in Tehran. Okay, so

Julia Chebotar 13:28

do you see a difference in food consumption and quality of food from Tehran to San Diego, or like us in general,

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 13:36

I can tell you, they may be sort of differences, but I think they say like sky is blue everywhere. It's like, because they think about it like Persian food is really, really delicious. But you know, when you make vegan tadi I can actually tiny, tiny, tiny pet it can be made tidy, very easily touching is touching is hard because touching has yogurt in it. But and yogurt and egg. But then tithing is mostly you know, you can put a bread or potato Yeah,

14:07

I do. Peter

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 14:08

nice. Oh, yeah, pizza. Yeah. So but the thing is that, you know, I'm just like how Americans love bacon and steak, Iranians love, you know, kebab, which is basically ground beef and like, you know, lamb. So I kind of feel like there is not much difference if I were because the other thing is that when I was growing up, like 30 years ago, when I was a little kid, there were only maybe a couple of companies who were making ice creams and you know, chocolate chips and iron like like m&ms and things like this. But now and like what is it like cheese puffs and all those snacks, all those like highly processed snacks. So, but now I know as much as you know, we have all the variety in our stores. They have it too. So I mean, like It's just like, I kind of feel like the food industry is kind of the same, they just like things more delicious, more sugar in it more addictive, and people like it, and usually you open a snack and seconds later it's gone. So I kind of feel like, and it's really, really sad. Like, as a doctor, I, I kind of

feel really, really bad because, you know, I see a lot of my colleagues, you know, we're very busy, you know, you, you barely can find a time to eat something. And I can see, most of my colleagues like, they open a soda open a snack, I mean, like things have changed, I can tell you because they actually call me health chief. because ever since I started, I started like, you know, talking to everyone, you know, individual group lecture not not lectures, which is like talking. And they're like interested because they have monthly, like weekly lectures that they have to order food, and they always have to get a vegan food for me. So this, like, we have been having this, like continuous discussions with my colleagues. And it's so funny that not like, I can tell you that more than half of them are now inspired to eat more vegetables. And like, last night, I had one of my junior residents send me a beautiful picture of her bowl. And she's like, I think you're now so proud of me. And she has this avocados and cabbages and like carrots, I'm like, I am proud of you. So I mean, like, and then a lot of others tell me that, you know, every time I walk in the grocery store, I like thinking about you. And I'm more inspired to you know, eat, make incorporate more vegetables in my food, which is really, really, you know, this is something that I really enjoy. But at the same time, every time I see a doctor, you know, drinking soda, or like opening a snack because they don't have time to eat healthy. I'm just like, I get so heartbroken.

Julia Chebotar 16:54

I was actually gonna say that, like, it's funny that these are doctors who are doing it are medical professionals and you still have to teach them to incorporate more vegetables into their foods.

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 17:05

Exactly, exactly. Because, you know, I kind of feel like as human beings in this day and age, we are so busy with what we are doing that, you know, we sometimes forget about, you know, our health and wellness. And food, food can easily be forgotten, the importance of food can easily be forgotten, you walk out there, like a lot of fast foods, a lot of things that are like more accessible easily. You can just like, you know, skimp on, you know, just just like, get wherever it's more accessible and easier because you don't have time but but yeah, I just like I take pride I don't have time to but then I actually think ever since I become like I went on a plant based diet, my life has become easier because I don't think just speaking of Persian food, you probably know how process it is every step that you want to make. You have to you know, it has to be cooked for a couple hours and it takes so much time. But then and then for the meat it takes like meat and chicken, it takes so much to marinate, you know, and you have to prep it. But with plants you just like I just like spray some spices on top and like bam, I'm done. I just put it in the oven or like my, what is it this like airfryer I just ordered my grill pan, I just like put it there, no oil, nothing. Few minutes later, I have like my zucchini, my sweet potato, my beans. And it's like my life has become actually really, really easy.

Julia Chebotar 18:37

So the culinary school that I went to is also like predominantly plant based, they were very much so it's like Whole Foods and health supportive things. And I remember like in the third day of class, we did the black, like a blanching and a steaming method and the raw method. And there was like no salt, no nothing. And I just remember learning like, people are missing out on like, the actual flavor of vegetables because they're so flavorful. So nutritious, and people are just, I think scared of something new.

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 19:11

It's so it's so amazing. Every time you know, it's so amazing because you can eat any vegetable literally raw, but then you never can eat any chicken, fish meat, anything raw. And then you but then still people think you know, I think most of the flavor comes from all the vegetables that we add to like whatever food but then a lot of times I got this question many many times like how do you you know, how would you leave on a plant based diet? How do you survive, you know? And then let me tell you,

Julia Chebotar 19:42

right, do you take what do you take b 12? Yeah,

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 19:46

yeah, let me tell you this. This is actually the funniest part of my plant based journey. Every single time I had a colleague or a friend, take one spoon of my food. They're just like, as soon as they put it in their mouth. They're like, this is so delicious. And I'm like, of course it is. So it's so amazing that they got so surprised that our food is delicious. And

20:11

like, I know I love it too.

Julia Chebotar 20:14

So before we like before the end of each podcast, I asked the person, if this was your last day on earth, and you could eat anything that you wanted, what would it be appetizer, entree and dessert from anywhere in the world, any dish, your favorites, and obviously plant based whatever you'd like.

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 20:33

I grew up I actually was a very fat I mean, like very overweight when I was young. So at some point I lost 4045 pounds. I kind of took into and I was when I was young, I used to snack and everything. Now I don't snack now my tastes change. So I can tell you that. I mean, maybe 10 years ago, if you ask me, I will just give you an answer right away. I will be like, you know, this dish is gonna be in this appetizer. But right now, I don't know if you realize I was just like having my like green smoothie. And like, I enjoy eating broccoli, and I enjoy just chewing on kale. And I kind of feel like it's just like habit. my taste buds are so used to enjoying all the nutrients I love.

Julia Chebotar 21:19

Don't they say that? In order to change your taste buds or your flavor palate, it takes like 28 days or something to me like then you like you taste like people who have gone vegan or plant based, like things tastes different after the first month?

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 21:35

It does. It does. And I can tell you as when I was young, I never liked lettuce like lettuce like the smell of it make me want to throw up like my mom, I couldn't bring it close to me. And now I just walk into the grocery store. And I enjoy saying like the very first thing I pick up is like lettuce and kale. And so I kind of feel like a lot of it is in our mind and like developing habits. But But then if you have to put that answer the question if you have to close it with that question, because I can tell you I still I think I enjoy

pizza very much. So like pizza is if I want to have I mean, like I don't like to call it a cheat day. Because you know,

Julia Chebotar 22:14

I know it has like a bad stigma around it. Yeah,

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 22:17

yeah. It's like I don't I don't eat it all that often maybe once a month because that the thing is that I'd rather you know make things from scratch healthy know that it doesn't have much oil and it's not processed. So but then if I want to, you know, have more variety in life, I may, you know, want to have pizza and pizza has been like, one of my all time favorite foods. So I make a lot of like, I make vegetable pizza with a lot of different colors. My husband says, this is your salad and bread like my it's so colorful, but it's beautiful. You know, I like it.

Julia Chebotar 22:59

I love it. I love it. Um, where can people find you? Where can they learn more about what you're doing? If you want to share so they can?

Dr. Adeleh Yarmohammadi 23:09

Sure. So my Instagram is actually very easy. It's Dr. Adele, Dr. Underline Adele. Adele is just like the singer, she made my life so easy. So people remember my name like I patients who like saw me last year and they walk in, they recognize me and I like Oh, you're Adele? And I'm like, Yes. So they're like, it's so easy. She made my life so easy. So Instagram is actually one of the most social media platforms that I use. But I can tell you that I'm not very, very active. And I haven't been active in the past couple months, just because I was so focused on my last year of training, and I was interviewing for a fellowship. But I actually am COVID Yes, we actually had a really huge backlog of COVID backlog patient of COVID that we had to deal with. But things are getting better. And I really like to you know, I try to inspire people with more recipes. Yeah. And like my grocery store finds or anything about like micronutrient macronutrient there's anything that I find helpful for people I usually like to share, but just because that's my true passion. I kind of feel like as soon as I'm done with my education, which is not going to be too long from now, I really like to pursue that whether it's like getting double board certified in like lifestyle medicine or like taking advocacy more serious. This is going to be you're going to hear more about of me.

Julia Chebotar 24:50

I love it. I can't wait. Thank you so, so much for being on today and doing this. I really, really appreciate you. Thank you Thank you all for listening. Remember to follow Dr. Adel, and follow me at health chef Juliet and subscribe to this podcast.