

Ask the Expert

Amy Dirks

Sports Nutrition



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Amy Dirks is the former sports performance nutritionist for MLS' Sporting Kansas City. Dirks has counseled many professional athletes during their pro seasons and is a Registered Dietitian-Nutritionist with a background in Sports Nutrition and Wellness. Also certified as a Strength and Conditioning Specialist and Personal Trainer, Dirks has a refreshingly logical approach to working with professional sports teams, elite youth soccer players, and individual pro athletes.

Dustin Burleson:

Hey everyone. Welcome. I'm so honored to have Amy Dirks on the program tonight. Amy, welcome. Thanks for being here.

Amy Dirks:

Thanks so much for having me, Dustin.

Dustin:

I know a lot of people that are joining us in Scottsdale for Peak Performance know who you are. They've read about you, we've been telling them about you. But for those who might be new to your world of sports nutrition, tell us a little bit about who you are, kind of your training and how you got to where you are today.

Amy Dirks:

Well, how much time do you have?

Dustin:

The short version, don't go all the way back to birth.

Amy Dirks:

Okay. All right, I won't. The short version is that I was a D1 college athlete. I played volleyball in college, experienced a lot of issues myself, inflammatory issues that really got me interested in nutrition and fitness and just health and wellness in general. So long story short, all of my inflammatory issues were due to diet, and when I changed my diet, it changed my whole life and everything went away. So I was very inspired by that. Definitely wanted to help other athletes in a similar journey, and so they didn't have to go through what I went through.

But sports nutrition is a tough field to get into as a dietician. So I did a lot of corporate wellness. I've been in many areas of dietetics, clinical dietetics, community nutrition, but I have always been a wellness dietician to the core. And so I've done concierge wellness and had my own business. And in that process was asked to start sporting Kansas City's sports nutrition program because they were ready to add that layer in. And that's pretty much how my sports nutrition career took off. I've always volunteered and helped teams and athletes and wanted to give back to sports in general, but that was pretty much the peak of my sports nutrition career. And since then I've been able to take everything that I've learned 15 years of being a dietician and take it online in order to help more teams and more athletes with their sports nutrition journey.

Dustin:

What's that been like for those of you who are not true football fans, what we call soccer over here in the US, Sporting KC is our local Major League Soccer team. What's that journey been like? I feel like that'd be kind of wild. When did you get the call? How did you find out? That's pretty huge.

Amy Dirks:

It is. Well, at the time I was doing the concierge wellness and happened to be with one of Sporting's owners. And I was his dietician and personal trainer. And so that definitely introduced me into that world. But also, I knew their chiropractor, I knew their strength coach, and they wanted someone that they could trust instead of just putting a description out there and asking for people to

apply for the job, they came to me actually at a Sporting event and just said, hey, what do you think about this? Would you want to give it a go? And I was like, of course. Yeah, let's do it. So I started as a consultant and went in a few times a week and worked with the guys and gave presentations and really got to know them while they were eating for the most part in their training kitchen, so to speak, which I just took everything out of and started all over again basically.

And I think that made a huge difference because what I did worked and guys who were having stomach aches before practice, those went away. Those who needed to lose a little weight that couldn't, that went away. And the best thing about that was having the support of Coach Peter Vermes and his staff. And it was a trickle-down effect, from the top down everybody was on board with it. Everybody followed what I said. It was the dream job for me because I'm like, oh my gosh, I've never had clients that listen to everything I said.

And so it was so perfect. I'm like, okay, athletes, that's my clientele because they're motivated, they want to perform at their best. And when you've got something that they don't know, then they're willing to listen. And so a long story short, it went so well that they created a position for me for the next season. And so I went full-time with them and it was great, but man, woo, they have quite the schedule and it just didn't work out with our family where we're at. And so I was really honored and privileged to be able to... That was my baby, to start that program and get it off on the right foot and then pass it on to a younger

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I don't know any parent that doesn't want to see their kids succeed in one way or another, so they were invested for sure. And so they're the ones that are probably doing the grocery shopping, the cooking. And so I just presented to them and was very relatable because I was a parent of athletes too, and I was also an athlete.

dietician that didn't quite have a family yet. So yeah, it was perfect, but that's pretty much how it went.

Dustin:

Did you see a similar mindset shift in... These are young athletes in the peak of their physical fitness. And I think back to when I was in high school and playing sports, we had this kind of mindset, you're burning so many calories, you can eat whatever you want, so you're consuming dairy and gluten, all these things that are highly inflammatory and horrible for you. And what was that like? Did you see a lot of that well, I'm... How do you tell a 22-year old who's running around for 90 minutes nonstop that they've got to change what they eat when they think, well, I'm young, I can do whatever I want?

Amy Dirks:

Yeah, totally. Oh yeah, they definitely think they're invincible. But I will say you have your veterans that have been in the sport for a long time, they realize the importance of, okay, my body's getting older, it's getting a little bit harder to recover. I have to change. So you don't have to convince them, but then your younger... So I worked with the academy, so those are kiddos 10 to 18 years old, and then the USL team in between that 17, 18 to 20, 22, and then your first team. And all of them had this nutrition knowledge deficit. So I really had to start with all of them on the same page. And I presented the exact same information to every single one of them, because they're working at their academy to move them up to the ASL team or to bring them up to the first team.

And so it doesn't do me any good to teach the older guys something different than what I'm teaching the younger guys. So the way I got them convinced or more involved was bringing in their parents or their caretakers. So I presented to them as well. And a lot of times these parents are so involved, whether it's from a financial standpoint or just a time commitment. I don't know any parent that doesn't want to see their kids succeed in one way or another, so they were invested for sure. And so they're the ones that are probably doing the grocery shopping, the cooking. And so I just presented to them and was very relatable because I was a parent of athletes too, and I was also an athlete. And when you wear those hats, you get a little bit more respect, I guess. So I presented to the parents, I helped several of the kiddos that were having some issues, celiac being one of them, some that really needed to lose some body fat, some that had even body

image issues. And you see a little bit of everything, even in guys, it's not just girls.

And I think the more that you help them, the more that they realize the importance of it. And when they start to feel that difference, usually it's about three weeks is they've stopped eating bagels every day before practice, and then they don't have stomach aches anymore, or they have more energy and they're not breaking out, their face isn't breaking out as much 'cause they quit drinking sodas. Anyway, whatever it might be, when they feel that difference, that's when you really have them hooked. But you really have to convince them to start.

And one of the ways is Peter was like, let's rip the bandaid off. We're just taking it away and telling them what to do kind of thing, which that did work. But with most people, it's let's just add in some good and then slowly the bad will go away. So with the younger ones, you have to be a little more creative because they're in school, it's not their full-time job. And so getting them to remember to eat the right snacks and to plan ahead, and the importance of not sleeping until 1:00 PM when you have a four o'clock game and you really need to get some fuel in beforehand. So yeah, they're all different, but you individualize it as much as you can. But really the basics, and that's what my programs are, if you're not doing those basics right, then specializing and really getting in depth with someone, it's not going to matter, you have to still do those basics right.

Dustin:

Yep. I love that. We've talked about some details, if you don't mind, because I used to have this... I think it's a

myth, you can correct me if I'm wrong, but in my head I was like, as long as I'm monitoring how much I eat and then how much I work out, so college, a lot of weightlifting, as long as I don't feel like I'm gaining the wrong kind of weight and maintain my muscle, I was kind of eating whatever I wanted and my physician looked at my blood panel one year and said, someone's been eating with indiscretion.

So it wasn't just calories in, calories out, it was a lot of red meat, a lot of dairy, a lot of gluten. And the older I got, I really started to pay attention to how that made me feel to the point where now if I have ice cream, I physically feel sick within 10 minutes. Talk about the type of nutrients, because I guess I'm bad at asking questions. It's a long question. Is there a myth behind, as long as you're watching how many calories you consume, and how many calories you burn or should we be thinking more holistic about the types of nutrients and what sorts of nutrients are really key to health?

Amy Dirks:

Yeah. Well, the whole energy balance scale is antiquated. If you think about food breaks down in the body into chemical messengers and tells the cells basically what to do, are you eating to heal your body with tons of fruits and vegetables and antioxidants? And are you eating to kill your body with all those processed foods and tons of sugar? And you can't say that the old Weight Watchers program, if I just stay within my points, then I'm fine. But I'm eating cookies and ice cream all day to stay within those points.

There's no way inside the body that is good for you. And so I always tell people, you have a hundred calories of broccoli and you have a hundred calories of cheesecake. Do you think those calories are doing the same thing inside of your body? Absolutely not. Who even? And most of the time when we start eating less and exercising more, we actually do the opposite to our bodies of what we want to happen, we down-regulate our metabolism, we mess up our hormones. And it's sad because that's still what's preached some, but it is the quality of your calories that make all the difference. So let's see, that was part of your question. And then the other part was maybe what that should look like?

Dustin:

Yeah, what are the key nutrients? I've always joked and said, man, if broccoli tasted like a rib eye, man, I'd be the healthiest guy in the world. If diet and exercise was a pill, we'd all be taking it, right?

Amy Dirks:

Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. If you could just pretend a big portobello mushroom was a burger, then yeah, you're good to go. Well, so the three macronutrients, carbohydrates, fats, protein, everybody's heard of those. Of course, there's foods within those that are better than others, but truthfully, if it grows and dies, it's better for you. If it comes in a bag or a box and has a label with tons of ingredients, it's not so good for you. If it's made in a lab, probably not good for you. If it's made in a farm or grown on a farm, then yeah, it's good for you. So vegetables honestly are the best farmacy, farm, F-A-R-M, farmacy, that we can have. And unfortunately, we don't get enough

of those in on a daily basis. So my rule to my kids is try to have a vegetable every time you eat, whatever that looks like. It doesn't have to be specific, it doesn't even have to go with whatever meal that you're having, grab a handful of lettuce with your breakfast. I don't care. You just need to have a vegetable every time you eat. Fruits are next, because those have a ton of antioxidants too. But those also have fructose, which are going to break down into sugar. Berries, for example, are probably the best fruit because those are the lowest in sugar. Eating probiotic rich foods, now we hear more and more about how important gut health is, and it was always important, it's just being studied more now and we're learning more about it. But if you think about it, your gut is your second brain. Everything starts there. That's where your immune system is. Your gut creates neurotransmitters that communicate with the brain. If you have an unhealthy gut and it's full of bad bacteria and you're just fueling it with sugar and processed foods, and that sugar's feeding that yeast and bad bacteria, systemically, you're going to be off. Your brain's going to be off. Your body's going to feel off.

Whether you're experiencing that through your aching joints or again, skin health or you can't sleep, or you're gaining weight, or there's all kinds of reactions that you can have, stomach issues, but your gut health is extremely important. So I always say as an insurance, take a probiotic. If you're not going to eat probiotic rich foods, which are mostly fermented foods. So you've got yogurt, kefir, kombucha, kimchi, sauerkraut, things like that, apple cider vinegar, those are not super common. Maybe yogurt, a lot of people might eat yogurt, but anymore, you

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So my rule to my kids is try to have a vegetable every time you eat, whatever that looks like. It doesn't have to be specific, it doesn't even have to go with whatever meal that you're having, grab a handful of lettuce with your breakfast. I don't care. You just need to have a vegetable every time you eat.

mentioned dairy and sometimes lactose. So a lot of times it's not the lactose in dairy that bothers people, but they think it is. It's really the casein, which is one of the proteins that's in it. So I always kind of point that out to people. It might not be that you lack the enzyme lactase to break that down, it could be that your gut is inflamed because of that other protein and dairy. So anyway, taking a probiotic is always beneficial and changing it up too, because all probiotics have different strains usually of bacteria. And so proliferating the gut with lots of different strains of bacteria, I think is good for you.

Dustin:

Yeah, any particular product you recommend? Beam is a company that makes CBD and pre and probiotic. It's basically powdered coconut water, I think, and pre and probiotics, and you just mix it in your water. It's got some electrolytes and stuff. Any brand you recommend or no?

Amy Dirks:

No, that's great. There's so many out there now. So I typically use Just Thrive. It's a spore based probiotic, so it supposedly survives more of the gut and then goes further down into the small intestines. So that's one that I use a lot. Honestly, Garden of Life is an easy over-the-counter one that you can find at Sprouts, Target, wherever. And they have specific ones, some for women health, some for mood and balance.

And I've had a lot of success with those too. And they are doctor formulated. But again, really there's so many products out there that we can talk about that too, and what to look out for, but that's another long conversation. But anyway, so I'm sure that one is fine. The thing with probiotics though, is that survival, are they getting down into the gut to really be beneficial, or are they dying in all the acids along the way? But everybody's different. Everybody's gut is different. And if you feel like it's working for you, then it's probably not a bad thing.

Dustin:

Yeah, what are some of your signs or red flags you would see in a product or maybe a diet or exercise program, anything where you're like, ah, that's a red flag. I think we dispelled the myth that you can just treat the body like a mechanical machine, just put so many calories in and take so many calories out and you'll be fine. That never worked for me, particularly once I got past the age of 30. Any other red flags you see currently with stuff being promoted?

Amy Dirks:

Exactly. Well, most of the time, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is because if there was this miracle product out there, we would all be healthy, we would not have disease, we would all be skinny or... I don't want to say the word skinny, but we would all be thinner and not have obesity and overweight, and that just doesn't exist. I wish it did, but then I wouldn't have a job either. Well, again, is it from a trusted source? That's one of the main things because they are so good at marketing now and promoting products to specific people, and athletes get a lot of that, especially protein powders. And oh man, if you look at the ingredients in some of those protein powders, it's no wonder athletes are having gut problems and joint problems. Some of that stuff is awful for you, but it's just a matter of they don't know that, they are hearing these claims and think that it's the best thing for them and it's going to help their performance or recovery.

And so knowing the source. Again, if it's doctor formulated, if it's coming from a dietician or a doctor or someone that's been recommending it, I use Emerson Ecologics. They only use trusted sources of supplements. And Zymogen is another one that I've used with the sporting players. And all of those are third party tested and just really reputable. So Thorne Research, Pure Encapsulations, Nordic Naturals, there's several brands that I tend to go to because I just know. If something is too restrictive, that's usually a red flag. They completely eliminate food groups or say you got to have tons of this and not any of that, that's usually a red flag as well. Super fast weight loss, detoxing. I'm not against a good detox in a way, but your body does have its own natural

detoxification processes through many avenues. So if you are fueling your body the right way and moving the body and sleeping and your body will function the way that it's supposed to, but we are exposed to a lot more now, whether it's environmental toxins, toxins in our food, in our water.

So our liver is having a little bit harder time keeping up and detoxifying all of those. And so if we overdo it, the body will either store that as fat because it doesn't know what to do with it, and it's just kind of saving it for later, or it'll present itself in some way eventually. So it's okay to maybe do a 24-hour fast or a couple days or just drink bone broth or some green juice, but you don't have to do that in extreme. It's just kind of a reset from time to time.

Dustin:

Let's talk about bone broth. You're the first person I saw that... Maybe I just need to get caught up on my literature, but bone broth apparently, according to you, and I agree, I've tried it. It's a great recovery drink. Why is that?

Amy Dirks:

Well, if you think about it, when you make bone broth, you're essentially cooking bones, hopefully from a healthy animal. That's the key. You don't want some animal that was in a feed lot that the stress hormones were going crazy, they had antibiotics, they had all these bad things, additional hormones. That's not the bone broth that you want. You want a pasture raised, grass-fed-

Dustin:

Grass-fed, yep.

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But if you think about it, your gut is your second brain. Everything starts there. That's where your immune system is. Your gut creates neurotransmitters that communicate with the brain. If you have an unhealthy gut and it's full of bad bacteria and you're just fueling it with sugar and processed foods, and that sugar's feeding that yeast and bad bacteria, systemically, you're going to be off. Your brain's going to be off. Your body's going to feel off.

Amy Dirks:

... just a healthy animal. But all the stuff from those bones leach into that broth or however you start water. So you have your collagen, you have your gelatin, all good for joints, proline and glycine are amino acids that come from bones that are great for your gut. Some glucosamine and chondroitin can also leach in there as well. So definitely an excellent recovery drink. And plus you have a little protein as well. And so protein, that's what repairs and rebuilds muscle tissue when you break it down. So you definitely need to have some protein. So I would have the chef at Sporting make a huge batch of bone broth. And he literally, in one of those vessels that you just open the tap and it comes out into a glass and they would

drink bone broth as part of the recovery. And yes, they thought I was crazy at first, but when I showed them why, and they would sip it like a tea almost. You could have it as a soup too. I always encouraged them to cook their rice in it at home or quinoa and it could kind of infuse into their food that way. There's bone broth powders and stuff now too, that you could put into smoothies. I don't love that. But I do use a collagen protein powder, it's unflavored, and I just put that in my coffee in the morning. So anyway, there's definitely ways to incorporate it in, but it is one of the best recovery drinks,

Dustin:

Way better than Gatorade. Hey, I hate to call out that specific brand, but it's really hard to find a sports drink that isn't mostly sugar, right?

Amy Dirks:

Oh yeah, and it kills me to see kids walking around drinking Gatorade just like it's water. And first of all, that's probably going to throw their electrolytes off a little bit. Second of all, it's just sugar. And Gatorade used to have dyes in it, and I think they've probably gotten on board a little bit with trying to make it a little healthier, because there's other brands that are doing it better than them. They're just really good at their marketing still. But I always try to tell people or athletes, whoever, to try to get your electrolytes from natural sources.

Coconut water is a great electrolyte drink. You can make your own, mix a little orange juice with fresh lemon juice, a little honey, a little sea salt and water, and mix that together. And you have a natural electrolyte drink. Same

thing with coconut water and lime juice and maybe some pineapple or something like that. Adding sea salt to your foods will help give you some electrolytes. Element tea. Element is a packet that you can get. I think they're doing a great job with keeping it clean. I used to use Liquid IV and Drip Drop, but I do think there's some better options out there now. But yeah, lots of sugar in Gatorade, and really, unless you've been working out for an hour and you're sweating or you're outside in the heat, you don't need that.

Dustin:

Yeah, I found for me, at least, in the summer, being outside and super hot and sweaty, some sort of little citrus and water makes me want to drink it more. There's times where it's like, man, I've been drinking water all day. It's just not as palatable. So those tips are great.

Amy Dirks:

Yeah, and you can make water interesting. I love adding cucumber and lime and sometimes mint or strawberries or whatever. You can add anything to your water to make it taste better. And you're adding in a little more vitamin C as well. But drinking water is the easiest health tip you can give. It's typically free for the most part. And if it's filtered, that's going to be a little bit better. But a lot of people will drink it from plastic bottles. I don't love that because there are chemicals that can leach from the plastic bottles into the water, especially if the bottled water's been sitting heated somewhere on a pallet on a truck somewhere. But I think drinking water, no matter where it's from, is better than none.



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Dustin:

Yeah, we talk about hydration. I've kind of shifted my exercise routine, talking to Travis Frederickson, who will be there at Peak Performance. He was an athletic trainer for D1 and some pro athletes, and he said, you need to be hydrating four hours before your workout. And I thought, well, that kind of kills my 6:00 AM workout, unless I'm going to get up at 2:00 and start drinking water. So any preference or advice on hydrating pre-exercise?

Amy Dirks:

That is a tough one, especially if you're training for something like a marathon, or you do have to wake yourself up and refuel and hydrate 'cause when you sleep, you naturally dehydrate. So when you wake up, the first thing that you should be doing is drinking at least 16 ounces of water just to start that hydration process. A lot of people, you have to remind them, set a timer on your phone or an alarm that goes off every hour or two, so you're rehydrating that way as well. For someone that does an early workout like that, like I said, as soon as you

wake up, you need to be drinking water. And then sipping throughout your workout. And then definitely after the fact too. A good way to tell are you hydrated is just by looking at your urine color. If it's super yellow like apple juice, you're dehydrated. If it looks more like lemonade or lighter, you're probably doing pretty good. But yeah, just replenishing throughout the day when you do have that early morning workout.

Dustin:

Yeah, I've noticed that. It's just first thing, now I have to drink a ton of water, otherwise you do feel it later in the day, you're just super dehydrated because if you're working out hard, you are going to lose a lot of electrolytes and hydration.

Amy Dirks:

Yeah. Absolutely. Water helps with every bodily process. And you mentioned energy, if you're dehydrated and then that becomes a chronic thing, you're definitely not going to have the energy that you could have. That's why I say it's the easiest health tip, because it literally helps everything. It makes your skin look better, it gives you energy. Everything regulates better whenever you are hydrated. So if there's one thing that you change, it's rethink your drink.

Dustin:

Yeah, it's so easy in schools and with kids, soda, and again, because they're young, people are like, oh, let them have a treat. And I'm like, I see a kid drinking Dr. Pepper, I want to grab it out of their hands. This is awful for you because it's not even real sugar now. It's high fructose corn syrup.



And so obviously the best thing that you could do is to pack a lunch from home, that way you know exactly what you're getting. And then if you're out and about, you can make good choices at fast food restaurants too, you just have to know what those choices are and then make them, instead of letting the burger and fries convince you.

And don't get me started, I've got a huge rant on the processed food industry. For parents who are listening, a lot of our members have kids, if you don't mind, I'm going to show your blog and what inspired a post about what kids are eating at school, and we'll talk about some things we might be able to do as parents to help.

So let me see if I can get this to pull up. I don't know if you can see this or not, but this was one of your daughter's school lunches in America. For the members in Italy and in other countries where they are shocked and dismayed by what we feed kids in schools here in the United States. This looks like some sort of fried chicken, maybe a biscuit, and what appears to be some very sad canned pears or maybe pineapple or something like that. So this is, by the way, pretty common. This isn't some rare offshoot of lunch, right?

Amy Dirks:

No. She literally sent me that and she said, look what they're feeding us.

Dustin:

This is sixth grade, by the way. It's good that she knows. And then I saw this, I was like, oh, that looks like a piece of rubber. It looks like some sort of a rubber egg. At least they got something green on the table. I'm not sure what that is. This is probably rabbit food here. This is the world's most inefficient way to get water into humans is through iceberg lettuce. Let's grow this thing and lose all of its water in the process of raising it. Let's put it on a truck and let's ship it to humans. And it has no nutritional value. So that might be a cucumber, that has some nutrition. Let's talk about parents who are fighting this with, what are they feeding my kids at school? What sort of advice do you have for moms and dads?

Amy Dirks:

Oh man, it's so hard because parents are just in this survival mode sometimes, and we're all doing the best that we can. And of course, I have taught my girls as much as I can so that they can make their choices when they're away from me and they know what's good for them and what's not. But not everybody does. And so obviously the best thing that you could do is to pack a lunch from home, that way you know exactly what you're getting. And then if you're out and about, knowing... Because you can make good choices at fast food restaurants too, you just have to know what those choices are and then make them, instead of letting the burger and fries convince you. But getting your kids involved, that's huge as well.

Unfortunately, there's no, here, this is exactly what you have to do in order to make this better.

I was on the wellness committee for the school district for many, many, many years, and I talked all the time about this, and I tried to get more nutrition education in the cafeterias, even through subliminal messages, like posters or things for the kids. Let's have a taste test of something and make it fun. And getting the kids involved in any way possible is going to make a huge difference because it gives them some control, and they like that. They like to be in control of what they're eating because that's usually why they become picky, because it's one thing that they can control, but also it teaches them so much. And even if they don't always want to cook or want to be involved, eventually these things will carry over into life. And some of those academy kids didn't even know how to boil water.

And so these are life skills that is really important. And the kids are not learning about nutrition in school these days. So modeling that behavior at home is important. Getting them involved, not forcing, encouraging. A lot of times we'll do almost like a charcuterie, we just put everything out and let the kids pick and choose. And so again, letting them be in charge. I help them make their lunches, but I try to make them do it, and then I just will help along the way.

But we're to a point now with our oldest daughter, if she wants to earn something, she has to come cook a meal in the kitchen. That's how she earns. Hey, at least once a week for a month, you're going to cook dinner for us, and

you're going to learn how to cook those things, and you're also going to be working towards a goal. So you can use it to your advantage. But yeah, there's no right answer necessarily, but there's also more wrong answers, I guess. So it has to work for your family. I think on that blog, I don't know, did I list all of the different options you could choose from these fruits, from these vegetables. A lot of lunch stuff is convenience foods, so picking and choosing what is best there. But I just presented this list to my kids and I had them go through and highlight what they wanted, and then we kind of bento box a lot. You just put it in that little bento box, and it's pretty easy. So I know what to have on hand, and if it's cucumbers, I try to just go ahead and cut up a bunch of them so they're easy and ready to go and try to eliminate any excuses for not having the healthy stuff.

Dustin:

Yeah. This doesn't have to be super complicated. The older our kids have gotten, we've got them involved in cooking. Some of the meal prep stuff that shows up, those meal delivery kits, and just letting them cook a recipe and learn. I was like, man, I wish I knew how to saute a piece of fish and whip up a pan sauce. Those are things I should have learned before I went to college instead of just throwing whatever frozen food was in the frozen food section into a oven and heating it up.

Amy Dirks:

Absolutely. Yeah. My college meals were literally cereal, probably two out of three meals and maybe a sandwich, maybe some pasta that didn't even have anything else

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Whatever it is that you're going to do, it needs to be something that you can see yourself actually doing in order to stick with it. So I always try to meet people where they're at and work around any barriers that are in the way. But typically it's like, okay, what is causing the emotional eating first? And is that something that you can change?

with it. It was just boring, low fat pasta. It's no wonder I had all these inflammatory issues.

Dustin:

Oh yes, it's all I ate, white bread and peanut butter. I was like, I don't know how I would've lived through college without white bread and peanut butter. And then luckily for me to get me off the peanut butter, because it's all sugar, unless you're doing actual peanuts or almonds. My firstborn has a horrible peanut allergy. It's like, oh, thank God, I can get rid of the Jif in the house, which is 40% sugar or something awful. It's in everything. Sugar is in everything in the United States. And now they're tricking us with these new like, oh, it's Stevia or it's monk fruit and you're like, eh, it's still sugar. Still sugar. So yeah, I do want to mention, your blog is fantastic. That's where I

learned about bone broth, I think last fall. Yeah, here, the recovery drink.

I've been turned onto infrared and cold laser. There's just really great stuff you can learn for free. So if you're watching along, go to Amy's website, **amydirksportsnutrition.com**. We'll put up links to all this in the show notes. But I do want to talk about, 'cause I know you've had obviously experience with athletes, you worked and from the private client side, you've done every possible role in the world of dietetics. I think the viewers will probably resonate with a lot of us listening and watching our dentists, our doctors, we sit a lot during the day and we use our brains. And so we come home and you've just done 10 or 12 hours of really intense work. A lot of orthodontists see 120, 200. We have a member who sees over 250 patients a day. I don't know how they do that.

It's very stressful. And you come home and then you want to give yourself a mental reward. Mine for many years was alcohol or steak or sugar. Going on three years sober. Pretty much got refined sugars out of the diet. But there's still that tendency sometimes to, you put a big plat of lasagna in front of me after a stressful day, I might just take you up on that. So dairy has kind of been the last and hardest thing to completely cut out, and I'm very, very, very close on that. What do you tell someone who has maybe an emotional thing where they're like, I need a reward, so I'm going to have that dessert, is it all or none? How do we attack an emotional eating habit where we want to give ourselves a reward at the end of the day?

Amy Dirks:

Yeah, well, when you're mentally exhausted that you're physically exhausted. And so the first thing that I usually try to help with those type of people is, can you take any kind of movement breaks throughout the day, even if it's literally something you're doing while you're sitting there, you have bands or little dumbbells or whatever, or maybe just stand up and do squats or you have stairs in your office or can you go outside and walk around the parking lot a couple times? Again, it can be like you're setting your phone for every two hours and you're taking some kind of movement break versus just putting more coffee in the cup. Yes, that might help temporarily, but then you're sort of creating that cycle of, oh, I need to refuel with more coffee in order to stay awake longer versus getting the blood pumping and a little physical activity in there.

Again, water, huge, hydrating throughout the day. Many of my CEO types or professional clients, it's early morning workouts and when they get that in, they have more energy throughout the day. And nothing in my mind is all or none when it comes to nutrition, because I don't feel like that's a practical approach. Whatever it is that you're going to do, it needs to be something that you can see yourself actually doing in order to stick with it. So I always try to meet people where they're at and work around any barriers that are in the way. But typically it's like, okay, what is causing the emotional eating first? And is that something that you can change?

Do you have any control over that? Is it more of a mental issue that you need to maybe talk to a therapist about or maybe you need to do some food journaling because it

could be that emotional attachment as well to food, but also it sounds like what you're asking is it just becomes comfort and a habit. And so it's really about flipping the switch and changing the environment. So you literally have to days and days and days, maybe weeks, do something different. Other than that comfort eating, make yourself go for a walk, make yourself read a book, make yourself take a bath with Epsom salts or I don't know what that looks like.

Think of something that you enjoy, call a friend, do something with your kids, whatever it might be. But you have to literally change the environment that you're eating that comfort food in, or drinking the wine or whatever it might be. And do that consistently or the other thing too is just don't have it around. I never bake, because we don't need sweets like that, maybe a piece of dark chocolate from time to time, but nobody needs to eat sweets every day. That should be a reward that you have every once in a while because literally Jared will eat whatever sweets it is with his coffee every morning. If his mom bakes cookies, it's like, oh, great, here we go.

Dustin:

It's available.

Amy Dirks:

Here's your chocolate chip cookies. Yep. Every morning with breakfast or not even with breakfast, it's just coffee and cookies. That's his breakfast.

Dustin:

Hey man, Ashley will bring stuff, I'm going to take that to the office. If it's here, I'm going to eat it. So, yeah. I found

in my post end of day stress, I got a close friend and Jared knows him. We all met in college, and we would go and get dinner and have a glass of wine, which turned into a scotch afterwards, and we just flipped because my blood pressure at one point was stroke level. I said, yeah, let's start doing coffee in the morning. Let's start doing an early morning tea or coffee. He's a big green tea guy. So we just switched that comfort. We still get to talk about, he owns a big business, we get to talk about life and stress. We just do it in a different environment. And my blood pressure's down to normal levels.

Amy Dirks:

Good for you.

Dustin:

Yeah, we'll see. Yeah.

Amy Dirks:

Instead of the wine meeting up for happy hour or whatever, I started doing either morning or whenever they were available, but we'd go for a walk.

Dustin:

So smart.

Amy Dirks:

Let's meet at English Landing Park, and let's go for a walk and talk instead. And so that way we're moving too. And if I happen to not get in a workout that day, at least I went for a mile walk.

Dustin:

Yeah, towards the end, before we joined with Rock Dental Brands and staff, 'cause I was into that, like I need to get up and move. I used to go at three o'clock, like clockwork, right before the busiest part of the day, I go get a cup of coffee and now that's like... I do want to talk about caffeine because I feel like at my most productive years, pre-kids, I didn't drink any coffee. Zero. And then we had three kids in 35 months, and I just became addicted to coffee because I was like, you birthed the child, that's a heroic effort. I will get up in the middle of the night and I will feed these kids.

Amy Dirks:

Good for you.

Dustin:

But I was on coffee nonstop because our firstborn was up like every two hours, the other two slept a little bit better. So I became this kind of four cups a day coffee. I'm down to one now. I don't know if you have a preference on what's a healthy amount of caffeine you or when to consume it. Any advice on that?

Amy Dirks:

Again, everybody's kind of different in what they can metabolize and handle, but I don't think it's healthy to drink a pitch or a whole thing of coffee all day long like some people do, but I think two cups a day is perfectly fine for you. Now the problem is usually what you're adding to the coffee, because a lot of people will add milk, cream, sugar, whatever. So that's where I think a lot of people take something that can be good for you and turn

it into something not so good for you. But there's so many good teas that are caffeine containing that are good for you, especially like you mentioned green tea. So again, I try not to take away these things like alcohol, coffee, but let's maybe replace one of them with a glass of water or in between your glasses of wine, have a glass of water, just incorporating some of those healthier things. But yeah, I think a couple cups of coffee a day are totally fine. What I tend to do is have a cup in the morning. I will add MCT oil and collagen protein to mine.

Dustin:

What kind of oil was it, you said?

Amy Dirks:

MCT.

Dustin:

Okay, cool.

Amy Dirks:

It stands for medium chain triglycerides. So it is a type of fat that's already broken down, so it can be utilized for energy a lot faster than what some fats can be. Again, I tend to work out in the morning, so that's sort of my energy. I don't know, it gives me energy. They kind of advertise, it's like brain fuel and it really does. It really does make me really clear. And I've found that if I don't have that fat and protein with my coffee, I get real jittery. If I have a cup of coffee without it, like if we're traveling or something. And so that tells me right there that my body's not processing the caffeine as well as it once was,

and I really need that fat and protein to slow down that process. But yeah.

Dustin:

Yeah. That was my issue at three o'clock, I often would have an apple standing up, taking a phone call. There was no sit down lunch when I was in private practice. So then you're going into three o'clock on an empty stomach with a jolt of black coffee and you'd get that hit. You're like, all right, and then you would crash. And so the team would make fun of me, they'd say, oh, he's in there, I'd be doing three sets of 12 squats and just have a big thing of water. I got into Athletic Greens. I was like, I can replace the coffee in the afternoon with Athletic Greens. And I got that kind of sustained energy boost, but I didn't get the crash. So the afternoon coffee for me was a big... Because that was years of just... I think there were some days I'm like, I've had six cups of coffee. I was the guy with the pitcher having it all day long. And it's tricky because you feel like you're high energy, but really I felt super dehydrated and at the end of the day just totally crashed.

Amy Dirks:

Yep, yep, exactly. Good for you for, again, flipping the switch and changing that habit. So I still like to have an afternoon cup of coffee from time to time. It's usually a small Americano or something. And I got one of those almond milk machines, so I make my own cashew creamer.

Dustin:

Oh, cool, all right, tell me about this because its on my list.

Amy Dirks:

Yeah, it's called the Nutri, N-U-T-R, And it's just this cute little machine and you just put in a little water, a little raw cashews or whatever nut, you can also do grains, oats, and you can create all kinds of different concoctions. And so I feel like I'm having some big treat by making a little shot of espresso with this cashew creamer that I made. And you add maple syrup or honey, if you want it sweet. I don't usually have anything sweet in mine. But yeah, I just think it's fun to do those kind of things. But yeah, that afternoon cup is more a treat for me than it is, oh my gosh, I have to have it. But I will say lately with coaching volleyball and stuff, at all day tournament, that afternoon, yes, I have to have it right now.

Dustin:

Yeah. Which also, we did the math, the older I get... Ashley's very good at being disciplined with the budget and I'm like, oh, a watch that costs as much as a car. Let's buy it. I'm the impulse buyer. But doing coffee at home and making your own milks like that at home, it's so cheap. It's ridiculous. We added up one year, we were like, how much we spent on lattes last year?

Amy Dirks:

Gosh, I know. And especially if you get the kids a acai refresher at Starbucks or whatever, you're spending 25, 30 bucks at a time to get all four of you a drink from from Starbucks. And so we briefly talked about this earlier, but the whole sugar thing, that is huge, especially with kids. We really only need, I think it's six teaspoons of added sugar a day for women and nine for men.

Dustin:

Teaspoons, teaspoon.

Amy Dirks:

Teaspoon. Yeah. And so if you think about that in a can of Coke is 10 teaspoons of sugar, so already you're already getting more than what you need and we're not even talking about the food that you've eaten. And so these Starbucks drinks, I think a Frappuccino has 19 teaspoons of sugar in it. And you see kids now, they constantly have a Starbucks drink in their hands and whatever other candy or sugar stuff they're eating. So sugar is what makes us fat. Sugar is what feeds cancer cells. Sugar is the enemy. Yes, there are some decent carbs for you that are necessary, but for the most part we're getting way too much sugar and we live through that whole era of everything has to be fat free. And so they pulled out the fat in all the food and they added sugar to it.

Like you said, it's not even sugarcane. It's high fructose corn syrup. So let's cook it down and make it even more processed and terrible for you. So, anyway, that is definitely what started part of our health crisis.

Dustin:

Oh, I one hundred percent agree. I don't know anyone who's truly getting healthy and at peak performance who's consuming refined sugar. It just does not happen. How do you feel about dried mango? That's kind of my go-to if I need something sweet. Are you cool with some sort of dried fruit?

Amy Dirks:

Yeah. So again, those are going to have some natural sugars in them, but that's okay if it's like you said, a treat or you put it in a trail mix with some.... That's the thing. If you have fruit, it's always, I think, better to have it with a little protein or fat.

Dustin:

With protein, yes. That's huge.

Amy Dirks:

Yeah, like some nut butter or-

Dustin:

Talk about that because that's been really big with us and the kids and do not just have a handful of anything that's carb because you're going to feel it pretty soon.

Amy Dirks:

Well, that whole crash that you were talking about, that's kind of what happens. So I always tell people like, okay, you're eating a firecracker right now, it's going to give you some energy and then boom, blow up versus let's light this candle and let it burn for a long time. So anytime that you add fat or fiber or protein to a carbohydrate, you're going to slow down that rate of absorption, insulin spike. And so I think you feel better doing that. Maybe you can't do it a hundred percent of the time, but if Harper has an apple, I'm like, well, here, here's this packet of almond butter. That's okay, yeah, it has some hazelnut or chocolate in it or whatever, but have that with your apple because it's going to help break that down a little bit slower.

Dustin:

Slower.

Amy Dirks:

I also use the example of a saltine cracker. So if you have simple carbohydrates, it's like you put a saltine cracker on your tongue and leave it. What happens?

Dustin:

It dissolves.

Amy Dirks:

It dissolves. Exactly. So that's kind of what those carbohydrates do in the body, they start digesting literally on your tongue. Protein, if you put a piece of steak on your tongue and just left it there, it's going to take forever to break down. Same thing with fat. Fat takes even longer than protein. So when you do that macro combo, I just feel like it's better. I think it sustains you, you're way more satisfied and it doesn't create that insulin response if you were to just have those carbs by themselves.

Dustin:

Yeah. That's big for me is just identifying what those little foods were that I was going to get. We had a snack room back in the break room with the team and all those snacks, we got to totally, like you did with Sporting KC, throw all these out. These are all sugar. So introducing different things was good for us. You touched on it, I want to hear your advice because we do all find ourselves in a situation, maybe you're coaching a team, maybe you're on

the road and you find yourself with only fast food as an option. What do you do?

Amy Dirks:

Well when you're traveling, there's lots of ways to still try to incorporate healthy foods and bringing your own snacks and planning ahead and that sort of thing. Having a cooler, your own water bottle, those are all easy ways that you can still try to maintain somewhat of a healthy diet. Let's see. I wrote down a few things.

Dustin:

Is there anything you would eat at McDonald's?

Amy Dirks:

Well, a salad. Their salads are probably not that great, but-

Dustin:

Real leafy. Grilled chicken breasts with nothing else, just take the bun and throw it in the trash, right?

Amy Dirks:

Yeah. They used to have a grilled chicken sandwich and you could, like you said, maybe just use the lettuce and the tomato that's on it and ditch the bun. There's salads, the yogurt parfaits if you eat dairy, that is okay. I'm sure it's probably a high sugar yogurt, but it can't be worse than eating one of their burgers and fries. But I think if they have any kind of vegetable option, you want to try to choose that, grilled versus fried, drinking water instead of a soda or lemonade, that's always a good idea too.

One of the things that I've done in my program is I went through every fast food joint that I could think of that people would want to go to, and I listed out, here's what you should choose from that menu. Planning ahead, if you know you're traveling, you can always see where you're going to be around and kind of look at the menus and kind of plan ahead that way. Typically, actually Starbucks has some decent snacks and stuff for you. If I have to choose something at Starbucks, it's usually one of their egg bites or their oatmeal, that's what I'll pick from there. When Sporting would travel, I actually packed snack bags for them so I could still kind of play puppet master and control what they were having that way too. Fruit obviously always travels fine for the most part. I said try to have the veggie, try to have protein if you can. What else? Substitute sides accordingly. Portion control is huge whenever you're eating out. We get big, big, big portions and our eyes are usually bigger than what our stomachs really are anyway. So if you can either share with someone or portion it out and put half of it in a to-go thing. But yeah, there's ways of doing it, it's just you have to want to do it too, and that's another big hurdle.

Dustin:

Yeah. Previously when we traveled a lot, when we were doing a lot of speaking for different companies and building the consulting business, and now you're entertaining people at dinner and so you're having a big meal and then the next morning you're up, maybe with a coffee meeting with someone. And so there's so many opportunities to eat out. Ashley's been so smart, she'll always call the hotel. Admittedly we stay at really nice places, so they'll take these odd requests, but if you call

the Four Seasons or Ritz-Carlton say, hey, do you just have a small fridge in the room for us when we get there. Some of the hotels we stay in Chicago, will stock the room with foods that we want, you just pre-order off of a Whole Foods ordering list. But doing that, it's not only cheaper, but it's like now we have things in the room where previously, if we're out traveling, we're having breakfast in the hotel, then we're out, so I'm like, oh, let's stop and get lunch. And then you've got a dinner with friends. It's like you've eaten out three times that day. It's way too much and the older I get, I'm like, I do not need to be eating out when we're on these trips. So she's been really good about just stocking the room with stuff in the fridge. Now you've got bananas, you've got some little cups of oatmeal you could heat up real quick. So it's interesting. She's much smarter than I am, but-

Amy Dirks:

No, that's awesome.

Dustin:

... I used to eat out three meals a day when I was traveling because everything at a restaurant I feel like starts with butter or cream and a lot of salt and it's too rich.

Amy Dirks:

Or bread or-

Dustin:

Bread. Yeah.

Amy Dirks:



We literally have a food system that doesn't care about health and a health system that doesn't care about food.

Yeah, that is awesome. Utilizing the hotel, their microwave, their refrigerator. I'm sure there's probably maybe some grocery stores close by or now, like you said, Amazon Prime, you can deliver Whole Foods if there's one close by to wherever you're at. They make it really convenient for you, but again, you have to be the one making those choices.

Dustin:

Yeah. The grocery store's a huge tip, by the way, that was in Vancouver and same thing, I was like, man, it's so tempting. Like, oh, there's a little pastry shop over here and a little restaurant over here I want to try. And in the bottom of the hotel I was in, there was this beautiful grocery store, which a lot of those high end stores have a dietician on team. So they're the prepared meals and then their salad bar area. I was like, dude, I'm golden. It had all the things I wanted I would normally get at home that were healthy, get a couple of those boxes back up to the room.

And I had lunch for the next couple days, so I wasn't eating. It was so tempting to be like, oh, we're in Kansas City, I got to try the barbecue. I've also noticed barbecue is like ice cream for me, man. It smells so good and I'll eat it and I will feel like crap for three days 'cause when you watch them make it, you're like, oh, that's like that rub is brown sugar, fat, brown sugar, smoke. I don't think we were evolved to digest brown sugar, fat, and smoke, but it sure does taste good.

Amy Dirks:

I have always told Jared, because he used to really be into grilling and smoking and all of that, and I'm like, you have got to come up with some healthier options whenever you're doing this because this is not something we can sustain or maintain. And so I got him barbecuing for the carnivore or what is it? It's a vegan cookbook for someone who likes to grill. And a couple other things. But anyway, we just started trying to grill vegetables and you just still being able to have that grilled food instead of burgers with a bun, we do burger bowls and we'll do grass fed beef and we belong to a farm that's up north.

We get all of our meats and vegetables, fruits when it's in season, fermented foods. They do some ready to make foods, but eggs, things like that. They make their own cheeses and cream and dairies and it's all A2 casein, so it's anti-inflammatory. Anyway, so we'll do a burger bowl and it's literally a salad, but it just has a burger that was grilled cut up in it. So anyway, there's ways of still having some of those where you feel like you're not depriving yourself, but it's much healthier for you.

Dustin:

Yeah, that's awesome. We'll include some links. Almost every one of our members is close enough to a farm or a local producer where you can get local eggs that are so much better than the breed of chicken we use in the United States, which is really good at turning corn into pretty unhealthy eggs. Yeah.

Amy Dirks:

The things that they feed these animals, you guys, when they say you are what you eat. It's true. Yeah, it's very true. So what is it that you want to be, and that's what you have to think about.

Dustin:

Hormones, antibiotics, corn. So I was telling Chef Allen this, I've got a friend who's a trauma surgeon. Jared will get a kick out of this every time he has a difficult surgery. He's a trauma surgeon in a big metropolitan hospital. So he is often putting people back together from gunshot wounds and he's trying to wade through a lot of fat tissue to get to the artery. And he'll just post a tweet that says FU corn because he's so sick of the American diet. He is like, give me someone where I can find their damn arteries and veins and I can save them, but it's really hard on a corn fed diet. Yeah.

Amy Dirks:

Isn't that sad? And SAD, that's the acronym that they use for the standard American diet because that's how bad it is. It has literally become these refined grains and corn is so genetically modified and so is soy. And those two things are in tons of our food. We literally have a food system

that doesn't care about health and a health system that doesn't care about food. And that was quoted by Dr. Mark Hyman, not my saying, but he is so spot on. So we have to change the way that we're doing this. And we talked about the kids and their school lunches. It starts young, so we should not be marketing sugary cereals and sodas and things like that, all these processed foods at these kids, and then all these convenience foods at these parents because they're limited with time and everybody's gotten away from the kitchen, everybody eats in their car on the go or we've just gone away from that traditional sitting at the table and cooking meals at home.

And I'm not saying anything bad about anyone who does that because that is sort of the social norm now. But look at your schedule. Try to pick at least one day that you might be able to cook at home and cook multiple, cook in bulk so that way you have multiple meals. And don't waste your time and energy just cooking that one meal. If you're going to cook, let's cook, and then try to, even one night a week, just sit down with your family and slow down and eat.

And it's super important and it's a reconnection time. And people, they don't look at food as fuel for the body, something that's necessary, something that will help with longevity. They look at it as it tastes good. And all of those processed foods and fast foods and stuff are so hyper palatable because they literally have these chemicals in them that make them taste like they just shoot off all these areas of the brain that are like, oh my gosh, this is amazing. But they're super high in sugar, super high in sodium. And then with the way our bodies work is like,

oh, I want that again. So I'm just going to keep fueling with that. And yeah, it's a vicious cycle. So you have to try to break that if you can.

Dustin:

Yeah. I feel like maybe one silver lining of the pandemic, at least in our household has been that we eat out a whole lot less and cook in a lot more. And it's been great because we get to talk and not rush through the day. And nothing against restaurants. I think nowadays chefs are more attuned to vegan options and people that are health conscious. But let's talk about that maybe as a last item because I feel like a lot of members are going, okay, that's great for you because that's your thing, but how do I actually meal prep? How do I actually do this? Ashley's been great about that. We will just roast a ton of vegetables, make up a big batch of quinoa or some sort of a grain, and then we'll just have those in the fridge. So then you can throw them into a salad real easy and it doesn't feel like you're cooking the rest of the week. How do you meal prep? Do you do all of it in one day or two days or what's your schedule?

Amy Dirks:

Well, used to, that's what I would do. I would make my list, what's our go-tos that I know everybody's going to eat, and what do I have on hand and what do I need? And base everything off of those two things. Lately it's kind of been flying by the seat of my pants.

Dustin:

You're a little busy coaching all over the country.

Amy Dirks:

Yeah, you open our fridge and there's tons of good stuff in there for you. So my meal prep now kind of looks like what I said earlier, was like, okay, I'm going to rinse the fruit and cut up the cucumbers and the carrots and have all of these things available and ready to go. And then I just throw it all together whenever I can. But I do have my tried and true that are super easy and roasting a chicken like you said, or roasting vegetables with it. And we do a lot of bowls, like I said. So the burger bowl. Every athlete loves Chipotle, every kid loves Chipotle, so we'll mimic that. So the kids will have the cilantro lime rice, but we make it at home and the veggies, the lettuce cut up, the avocados. We'll make a guacamole if we want, a quick guacamole, and then we'll have whatever meat, if we have chicken or something from the farm that they had, they make their own chorizo.

And that's always really good. And sometimes we'll saute peppers and onions and again, it's like, okay, you get to add whatever you want to your bowl. So we tend to do that a lot. We do a lot of tacos and bowls and or lettuce wraps or some Asian type foods because as long as you know how to mix those flavors, it's super easy to make a sauce. And then you can just have a stir-fry, kind of just throw some rice and some veggies and a protein and that sauce and you're good to go.

Lately we've done a poke bowl, but we actually cooked the salmon. So yeah, we did a broiled quick salmon, but we cut it up into small chunks and then you can use sesame seeds and cilantro and shredded carrots and you can make it really healthy and really fun too. It doesn't have to

be gourmet. And this is where that principle of it doesn't have to be all or none. I've always admired Sandra Lee, she was a Food Network chef a long time ago, and her show was semi-homemade because that's kind of the way that I grew up cooking was semi-homemade. I would take a can of something and some noodles and then fresh stuff and then mix it together to make a meal. And so that's okay too, especially if you're still cooking at home. Again, it doesn't have to be gourmet.

Dustin:

Yeah, I've noticed it's not as hard as I used to think it was, particularly coming out of college and into residency, it's just like, oh, cooking at home has got to be so difficult and-

Amy Dirks:

No. With let's say people that are just starting out, or some of the athletes, I kept it very, very simple. Literally, you get a whole sheep pan and you divide it into three with foil or whatever, and you put chicken in each one, but you use three different rubs or sauces and then you roast or even steaming the vegetables while your rice is cooking.

There's tons of ways that you can... And any more we have all these gadgets in the kitchen that help make cooking a lot simpler. And I don't know how we survived back in the day without a air fryer and a insta pot.

Dustin:

Right. Yeah. I've gotten into, I'll post a link in the show notes, I'm not sure if I've talked about it with Chef Allen, but gotten into spices. There's a guy out of New York, he's a classically trained chef from Israel, and his whole world was like, I want to educate the public on spices and how

most of them have been sitting on a shelf for 10 years before you ever get to it or it came from a factory that we don't know who sourced it. It wasn't organic, we don't know. There's arsenic and lead in some of these spices, so his are all about fresh.

And some of these, you get them and you're like, oh my God. I'm taking them to friends and giving them as gifts, smell this chai. And they're like, oh my God, that's so different. So his company's called La Boite, but I've been learning cooking at home sometimes just adding a few extra spices doesn't just taste great, but I feel better after it because there's more biodiversity in what your gut's trying to process. And it's just been another thing where I'm like, I never used to think about, it was was like, oh, spices, salt, pepper. That was it. So, pretty cool.

Amy Dirks:

And so that's the other thing is that whole hyper palatable, that food that we were talking about, when you start taking those away and you actually start eating real foods, your palate changes and you don't need all of that flavor that you needed before because you actually like the taste of the vegetables that you're eating and you're not trying to hide it or mask it.

Dustin:

It's a great point. That's so funny because the first time I had a natural almond butter, it was like, oh God, this is weird. And now if you gave me Jif, it would make me sick to my stomach because it's so sweet, it's so sugary.

Amy Dirks:

Now you can taste all the chemicals, all the sugar.

Dustin:

Yeah. Your palette totally changes. I think of the stuff I ate as a kid, like Dunkaroos, taking starch and dipping it in chocolate, fake whipped cream. I don't know what it was, but it was oil and fat and sugar and-

Amy Dirks:

Oh, no.

Dustin:

My dad was a dentist. We were semi-conscious about what sort of sugar we were eating, but it was Kool-Aid, Sunny D, cereals and Oreos. And I look back at that and go, man, what the hell were we thinking?

Amy Dirks:

I know. I would dip Doritos in cheese whiz with a Pepsi. Oh my gosh.

Dustin:

It's all chemicals. But we would love it because it has that kind of engineered taste, which is just so crazy. Man, I could talk to you all day. I know we've hit our limit. I do want to make sure members can find you. We'll post a link to your website. Anywhere you want to push them and direct them for more information on your blog or your programs?

Amy Dirks:

Well, like on my blog, you saw where it says Contact Amy. So on my website, blog, whatever, it'll send me an email and I'm happy to answer any questions because I too love talking about this kind of stuff. And my husband doesn't love talking to me about it all the time because he is heard everything. So anytime anybody wants to ask me a question, I'm more than willing to talk about it. So that's a good place to find me. And then on Instagram at AmyDirksSN, the SN stands for sports nutrition. And again, yes, I'm a sports performance dietician, but I'm still a wellness dietician to my core. So just about anything goes, I feel like.

Dustin:

Cool. Awesome. Well, thanks for promoting the message. Thanks for being here. It's awesome to have you on the program. We're so honored. Thank you.

Amy Dirks:

Yep. Thanks for having me. Be glad to come back sometime too, if you want me to.

Dustin:

Yeah, absolutely. We'll get this to the members out in Peak Performance, and then this will launch to the general membership here sometime soon. So thanks again, Amy. We'll post links to all your content.

Amy Dirks:

All right, sounds good. Thank you.

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