



Developing a Plant-based Palate with Vandana Sheth, RND, CDE (ep – 35)

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[00:00:14] **Ginger Hultin:** Welcome to the Good Clean Nutrition podcast. I'm Ginger Hultin, an Integrative Registered Dietitian Nutritionist.

[00:00:22] Today, I'm excited to talk with Vandana Sheth. She is one of the nation's leading registered dietitians, and in this episode, we're going to discuss food, identity, and how she lives a plant based life. But first, in my experience, people actually do plant based wrong. All the time. I've actually been through that myself.

[00:00:42] I've been plant based most of my life since I was a child. But I remember growing up in my teen years, I really didn't know what I was doing. I was just trying to not eat meat. And so I was eating mostly carbohydrates. But of course there's carbohydrates, protein, and fat, and you need to be having the right combination, and I just wasn't.

[00:01:02] Soda is vegan, right? Or certain cookies are vegan, french fries are vegan. Not that any of those foods are bad, but if that's all you're eating, it's possible to do plant based diet. in an unhealthy way. And some of my clients also think that plant based just means eating salad, sometimes eating plain salad or plain veggies.

[00:01:23] And again, they're just not feeling well. And that's where I come in and say, Hey, how can we meet your protein needs? Are you getting enough fat? Are you getting enough calories? And the reality is, when people are coming to me as a dietitian and they want to lower their cholesterol, they want

to reduce their blood pressure, manage their blood sugars, they want to have more energy, have better digestion, one of the first things I do is say, how can we get you eating more plants?

[00:01:48] Not that you have to be vegan or vegetarian, but a plant based lifestyle really can help you with your health. In honor of doing it right and feeling good, Let's go deeper in my conversation with Vandana.

[00:02:04] Welcome, Vandana. I'm so happy that you're here. Hey, Ginger. I'm so excited to be here. I've been looking forward to this because you and I have known each other for a really long time. We actually met because we were both spokespeople for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. But today, I'm excited to dive into how you practice and your unique background and your specialty and just to learn more from you.

[00:02:25] **Vandana Sheth:** I'm excited. I always look forward to a chance to chat with you. And yes, we have a lot of overlap, but it's always great to dig a little deeper.

[00:02:34] **Ginger Hultin:** One thing I'd like to know more about, just because we don't talk about this when we're, you know, just day to day life. I want to know more about your journey to becoming a dietitian.

[00:02:42] **Vandana Sheth:** Well, my journey started in India. I was born and raised in India in a culture where food is celebrated. Food is joyous. It's savored. I didn't realize I wanted to be a dietitian. I loved science and I wanted to do something science based, but I'm also a classical Indian dancer. I wasn't sure where my life was going.

[00:03:02] When I went to school, I was pre med, but I realized I did not want to be a physician and I found that there's this amazing field of nutrition and dietetics. So I started pursuing that and I got my undergrad degree in nutrition and dietetics because being a dancer, enjoying flavorful food that my mom made, I didn't realize the connection till I was a little older and realized that I was benefiting from this amazing way of eating that my mom made.

[00:03:28] I was performing better. And so that drove my passion to start going into this field. And then I came to this country, I fell in love with my husband and had to redo an undergrad degree because food is so important. So different in two different parts of the world, but, um, it was one of the best decisions I made because I absolutely love helping people enjoy their food, keep their cultural traditions, and still prevent any chronic conditions or manage their chronic conditions.

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[00:03:55] **Ginger Hultin:** am really interested in exploring more today about the cultural differences and similarities and how you help your clients especially celebrate cultural foods here when a lot of times my experience is people are being told not to eat their cultural food but there's something very important about you which is you have a unique specialty within nutrition and I want to hear more about that.

[00:04:16] **Vandana Sheth:** One of the areas that I'm really passionate about is plant based foods and plant based nutrition. I was born and raised vegetarian and I just think it's such a great way to eat and live. When it comes to plant based, as you know Ginger, it's a spectrum. It does not mean avoiding all plant based foods.

[00:04:33] Animal products are only eating plants, but if we can push more towards getting more plants in our diet, we feel better, it's sustainable, it's good for the environment, and there are some really creative, fun ways to enjoy food.

[00:04:45] **Ginger Hultin:** I really love your joy around vegetarian food, because I feel like a lot of times people feel like it's restrictive, when actually it can be a celebration, like you said.

[00:04:55] I'm interested in something that you were talking about previously. Your mom had a big influence. in, in your interest in nutrition and health. So your mom was making delicious vegetarian meals for you growing up. And it seems like that's still a big part of your life. What did she do right?

[00:05:10] **Vandana Sheth:** You know, it's hard to just pinpoint one thing.

[00:05:12] She's definitely my hero. Someone I hear in my ears all the time when I'm coming up with recipes. She was extremely creative. What she did right was really, there was no judgment around food. I think she was way ahead of the curve. She picked daily fresh stuff. Seasonal produce, and she had the luxury of having some help at home, so that allowed her to do a little bit more intense prep and putting these amazing meals for us.

[00:05:38] Spices, herbs, to season foods. She didn't go heavy on sugar or salt or fat. It was just, you could taste the flavor of the vegetable or beans or lentils and grains. Everything was handmade, and you could just taste the love. That's it. That was the secret sauce.

[00:05:56] **Ginger Hultin:** I feel like so many people are like, I don't like beans or I don't like tofu or I don't like veggies, and I always tell them, don't eat them on their own.

[00:06:04] Add flavor and add spice. And it sounds like that is a huge focus of what your mom did. I think that you also do.

[00:06:11] **Vandana Sheth:** I'm always playing around with flavors. My kids to this day, they're young adults now, but from when they were young kids, they were my first tasters. They still are the ones that I like. that enjoy anything new that I'm creating in the kitchen.

[00:06:23] And it's fun to have people who are open to trying different things, because that makes it more fun for you as a chef or a cook.

[00:06:31] **Ginger Hultin:** I love your outlook on nutrition as fun. That's how I see it, too. I think a lot of people don't. don't see it that way. But I want to learn more about your transition to the U.

[00:06:42] S. because that sounds like a pivotal moment. When you came to the U. S., what kind of adjustments did you make to cooking and eating? Because I imagine, like you mentioned, the culture is very different, the access to different foods or spices might be different. How did you transfer? your cultural traditions and your mom's favorite foods here.

[00:07:01] **Vandana Sheth:** It was definitely a journey. I was fortunate in that I had been to the United States as a young child and I had some family here and I wasn't coming by myself. I came, I fell in love with my husband, but he was born and raised here. And so I was coming into this family that already had established life here.

[00:07:19] I had access to grocery stores. I was able to find things. It was definitely interesting growing up vegetarian from a culture where when you went to a restaurant, the whole menu was pretty much open to me with maybe a few things that I didn't eat because of my preferences, whereas when we went to a restaurant here, initially, it was shocking how few items were actually vegetarian.

[00:07:40] There were some restaurants where there was nothing on the menu and I had to ask the chef or the cook to prepare something off menu. It was definitely an adjustment, but going to school helped, learning about what people eat here helped, and also finding shortcuts to cooking here helped. I may not have had the exact ingredients for a recipe, but that was That involved more of

the creative juices and trying to substitute and swap things to get that flavor profile without spending eight hours in the kitchen.

[00:08:09] That was something that was important. So that transition led to what I do today.

[00:08:15] **Ginger Hultin:** Absolutely. And I hear over and over from my clients, I can't spend my entire weekend doing food prep. And so your emphasis on how can this fit in and be easy and fit into my busy work and school and family life makes so much sense.

[00:08:28] Yes. I do want to talk more about plant based specifically because there is all this conversation back and forth about the word plant based versus vegan versus vegetarian. I use plant based and I hear you saying that a lot too. Can we define plant based or like what does that mean to you?

[00:08:46] **Vandana Sheth:** The word itself says there are more plants on your plate.

[00:08:49] I don't think it's exclusively plants. I feel it's a spectrum. The more plants we can get on your plate, the better you are off in terms of health and wellness and just preventing chronic conditions. And it's good for the environment. So when I talk to my clients, it's not about just taking away something like animal products, but what are you adding into your plate?

[00:09:10] Because it's really important to add those foods in. Because as you know, Ginger, you could eat Anything that's strictly plant based, but doesn't necessarily mean it's got this health halo around it and that's healthy. We need to still look at what are the colors on our plate. Are we getting colorful fruits and vegetables?

[00:09:25] Are we getting beans, lentils, soy products for protein? Are we getting nuts and seeds and avocado for our healthy fats? What is the balance? Are we getting whole grains? So when you look at that perspective, that's really what plant based means to me.

[00:09:40] **Ginger Hultin:** That is how I practice also, and a lot of people come to me and they say, I'd like to work with you, but I don't want to be vegan or what have you.

[00:09:48] And I always say, hey, I work with people on all sorts of different diets, but I am going to talk about increasing plants. And it sounds like that's how you practice too.

[00:09:56] **Vandana Sheth:** That's exactly the same conversation I have with many new clients who come in, you know, when they look at our website or look at my cookbook and they think, okay, you literally are just practicing with people who eat vegan or vegetarian lifestyles.

[00:10:09] And I said, no, really it's wherever you are. But my goal is to emphasize getting more plants on your plate.

[00:10:15] **Ginger Hultin:** Absolutely. Absolutely. And that's so inclusive, but you hit on a point that is so important and I wish people knew more and that's vegetarian and vegan diets are linked very directly to positive health outcomes.

[00:10:28] There is so much research out there that shows that vegetarians and vegans are at a reduced risk of lots of different chronic diseases. There's Research that shows a reduced risk of developing certain types of heart disease, lower risk of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure control, even a reduced risk of certain types of cancers.

[00:10:48] And I think that we should really be talking about the ins and outs and why that is the case on plant based diets.

[00:10:54] **Vandana Sheth:** When you look at plant based diets, again, it's a spectrum, but when we think about it in terms of food, when you look at fruits and vegetables, we're getting a wide array of nutrients, not just vitamins and minerals.

[00:11:05] We're getting these plant compounds that have been looked at for decreasing inflammation, enhancing our ability to fight off stuff that happens to our body that is harmful. When you look at beans and lentils, they're loaded with fiber, and we know fiber can have a profound impact on your heart health.

[00:11:23] on your gut health and can help potentially with blood sugar, decreasing the spike in blood sugar. So those might be some of the reasons why we see those benefits. But it's again, the whole package. You can't strip down food to just single nutrients. It's coming in with that fiber, with those micronutrients and the split of macronutrients that we get from plant foods that might be beneficial in decreasing our risk for some of these spikes.

[00:11:49] conditions.

[00:11:50] **Ginger Hultin:** And I know that a lot of the proteins that you're mentioning, they are really high in fiber. There's no better way to lower your cholesterol than to have fiber in the diet, but they also are usually devoid of

saturated fat. So you've got this interesting reduction in saturated fat, higher fiber, like you mentioned the vitamins, minerals, but also the anti inflammatory antioxidants.

[00:12:09] And a lot of people are concerned about plant based diets like, Oh, I can't get my nutrients, but actually research shows that. Plant based diets are higher in a lot of nutrients, and there's only a couple that you really need to look out for, like B12 for example, um, but I really think that plant based diets are so underutilized and they have powerful effects for

[00:12:29] health.

[00:12:30] **Vandana Sheth:** Yes, and that's what the studies have shown. Big studies have shown that going more plant based can significantly decrease your risk for heart disease, diabetes, um, some types of cancer, and there's still more research that's being done. Um, there's the whole longevity studies that we know, uh, when they followed people who followed more a plant based diet and how they, it's not just about living longer, but it's the quality of life, aging gracefully, being able to do everything you want to, even when you're significantly older.

[00:13:01] That's so important.

[00:13:03] **Ginger Hultin:** I'm glad that you mentioned about the studies too because this isn't just like one or two small studies or animal studies. We are talking decades of studies on thousands and hundreds of thousands of people. Like we really know this is good research, good quality research.

[00:13:18] **Vandana Sheth:** Food can have such a profound effect on your health and wellness.

[00:13:22] And so if we can just tweak, you don't have to do this complete, you know, swap out of your lifestyle or your food preferences. It's really where are you at? What can we do to enhance what you're already doing to promote these healthy habits?

[00:13:35] **Ginger Hultin:** I'd love to talk about how you help your clients do that, right?

[00:13:40] So somebody comes to you, maybe they've been diagnosed with a chronic disease, maybe they just want to live that healthier lifestyle. One thing I hear a lot from my clients is they want to go more plant based or they want to be

healthier, but sometimes their family, like their kids, their, their partner doesn't want that or doesn't know how to do it.

[00:14:00] If you have anyone in the family resistant, how do you help your clients navigate that?

[00:14:05] **Vandana Sheth:** Yeah, great question. And yes, it's very common for clients who want to make the switch or enhance some of their meals, but are worried that they're going to have to make multiple meals for different family members.

[00:14:15] And that's absolutely not true. The key is to involve everyone in the process. So for example, if you are doing something like Mexican food, it could be taco night. Make it so that it's simple, seamless and everyone can have something that they like. So for the taco night, you have your corn tortillas, you have your protein, and instead of your typical ground meat, maybe how about doing some beans or maybe some, um, soy crumbles in place of the meat.

[00:14:45] You still have the same space. Spices and flavors in there. And then have veggies that everyone likes, have some salsa, have some rice and corn. Right there is a mix and match approach. So you don't feel like you made different meals. People could customize it to their preference.

[00:15:01] **Ginger Hultin:** That is huge. And what I hear over and over from my clients is I don't like making five different meals for five different people.

[00:15:08] And so the way that you're explaining it is make one, have one theme and have people mix and match, pick their own options. That's awesome.

[00:15:15] **Vandana Sheth:** Exactly. And it's fun. You don't have to sit in the kitchen and make different meals. It can be just like we talked about the theme. It could be Indian. It could be Italian.

[00:15:25] It could be Mexican. You decide what the theme is and you know what your family likes to eat. Make sure some of those components are there, but also involve more of these plant based options so that they give it a try and see, they may be surprised.

[00:15:38] **Ginger Hultin:** I think when people have the option to choose, that level of autonomy can often invite people to be more open minded and accepting.

[00:15:46] I wanted to explore also, you mentioned like healthy swaps. You know, how do you do healthy swaps for dinners, for holidays that might be sort of meat centric? How do you manage that with your clients?

[00:15:59] **Vandana Sheth:** Yeah, it's again about asking what is important to them. It really comes down to what do they enjoy about this food, looking at that recipe and making tweaks.

[00:16:09] For example, when it comes to Thanksgiving, that's a traditional American holiday. Many of my clients love it and it's one of my favorite American holidays. So when it comes to that Thanksgiving meal, there are certain things that are tradition that everyone enjoys. If you look at that meal, Pretty much most of the sites are really plant based.

[00:16:28] So it's just an entree and maybe you have your entree, your traditional entree that you are used to making for the family. But how about having a different entree on the side? In our family we rotate. We usually have either some kind of lasagna or we have stuffed quinoa bell peppers or we have a chili or you could have tamales.

[00:16:49] So you can play around with it and introduce it and see what happens. As we've gone over the years, our family, we've noticed that the plant based option, Entree, is often so popular that we, it's not just for those who are plant based, so we need to double that up.

[00:17:05] **Ginger Hultin:** I am so into the idea of lasagna for Thanksgiving.

[00:17:09] I might steal that from you.

[00:17:10] **Vandana Sheth:** Oh, good. Especially if you want to do like a fall themed one and you could add some pumpkin or butternut squash. That'd be amazing.

[00:17:18] **Ginger Hultin:** All right. It's already on my menu. I love it. I love it.

[00:17:22] It's no surprise that Orgain is America's number one plant based protein powder brand because their products are really delicious and made with clean ingredients.

[00:17:31] I love their organic plant based protein powder for my clients because it tastes amazing and it's also packed with nutrients. It comes in a large variety of flavors and offers up to 21 grams of high quality plant protein. It has

a complete amino acid profile, there's no added sugar, and no artificial sweeteners.

[00:17:49] Visit Orgain.com to learn more.

[00:17:53] One thing that feels important and it's so cool to go between different ideas of cultural heritage and international cuisines and holidays. I think the dietary changes need to remain culturally relevant. You had a really great example on Instagram, you had a story of like a CEO client who had diabetes and he tweaked his morning chai routine.

[00:18:13] Do you remember that person?

[00:18:14] **Vandana Sheth:** Yes. Yes. And he's one of, he's doing so well. This is a client who is a CEO of a very successful company. Many of my clients are high energy, high vibe clients who are so successful professionally and nutrition and food is one area they need support. And especially if they're of Indian origin, they reach out to me because they know I get it.

[00:18:36] I know the culture, I know the food. This was a client, as you mentioned, he came to me because he wanted to tweak his blood sugars. And when we looked at what he loved to do, there are some non-negotiables. We all have those. For me, it's my morning cup of coffee. Don't mess with it. And I have clients who love their chai.

[00:18:54] And we made just a few tweaks to his chai. And amazing, his Continuous Glucose Monitor reflected that change was the best thing that he could do and he's feeling better.

[00:19:06] **Ginger Hultin:** It's so great that small changes can lead up to such big changes in your health. I mean, what kind of tweaks did he make? You know, what, what did you do to remain culturally relevant, but also have it be better for his health?

[00:19:18] **Vandana Sheth:** So what we did was with chai, typically it's made from milk. with water, you add some spices, you add some sweetener. That's tradition. And so we swapped the milk for one that was lower carb, higher protein. We swapped the sweetener. We kept the black tea. We kept the spices and that was it.

[00:19:38] **Ginger Hultin:** It's so simple, but it really made a big difference for him.

[00:19:40] Huge. What kind of milk did you use for that change?

[00:19:44] **Vandana Sheth:** You know, for him, it was a plant milk. Uh, one that had protein added to it, but I have other clients who do, um, other milk options that are available in the market that are lactose free that are lower carb higher protein.

[00:19:59] **Ginger Hultin:** I don't know if you do soy often but I like to do soy milk for my clients because it has the highest protein content of any plant based milk and I just have people make sure they get unsweetened to help cut down on that added sugar.

[00:20:10] **Vandana Sheth:** So soy is one of my favorites, but there's also other milks now, like the almond milk that has pea protein added to it. And so there are options. So it's about learning how to read labels, looking for what is it that you're missing and how can we add that in.

[00:20:24] **Ginger Hultin:** I have the same issue with plant based yogurts.

[00:20:27] A lot of them don't have any protein and they're really high in added sugar. And so now they're starting to have some really interesting swaps where they are doing plant protein added. So you're right. Label reading is absolutely critical and I know that you and I as dietitians like that's a major thing we can help people with.

[00:20:41] **Vandana Sheth:** Yes, it's one of my favorite activities. I can spend hours in the grocery store looking for new products and reading labels.

[00:20:48] **Ginger Hultin:** That's like a dietitian playground. Well, one of my specialties is meal prepping. So I wanted to talk about that with you because you mentioned it earlier, and it's really, really important to make plant based dietary changes more realistic.

[00:21:03] Because a lot of people are saying, again, they're making different meals for different folks. They're chopping all day Saturday. How do you help people food prep in a way that's not overwhelming while they're balancing like job, family, everything?

[00:21:16] **Vandana Sheth:** There are different ways to approach it. Some clients like to meal prep and put everything in boxes for different meals.

[00:21:22] Sometimes that's really overwhelming. So I'd rather my clients, depending on where they are, prepare two to three protein options, one to two

carb or grain options. And then lots of veggies. And that way they can mix and match depending on their flavor profile and what they feel like in the moment, because when you have these boxes, some days you just don't want to eat what's in that box, even if you have meal prepped on the weekend.

[00:21:46] So it's nice to have that flexibility. I often have my clients chop veggies, put them in the fridge. That way it's easy or buy. Prepped veggies. Buy these salad kits and then you can mix and match and toss protein and whole grains or even frozen vegetables. They are a huge important part of my meal prep and something I highly recommend because it's always there in your freezer.

[00:22:08] Super easy. You don't have to wash, clean, chop. It's ready to go. Having canned beans and canned lentils can really speed up that cooking process for protein. Having tomato sauce, canned tomato sauce, Big fan. I love that because that can add that lycopene and flavor and lots of spices and herbs.

[00:22:29] **Ginger Hultin:** I give similar advice and I think any way that we can speed up the process for people is critical, but I do get asked a lot of times, Oh, I thought we weren't supposed to eat frozen or canned foods.

[00:22:39] What do you tell your clients about that?

[00:22:42] **Vandana Sheth:** Well, first of all, bust that myth, because frozen food, especially frozen produce and canned beans and lentils can be phenomenal, a great way to get nutrition in. And if you've ever been to see this journey, it's fascinating. Like tomatoes, they go from farm to the can within hours.

[00:23:02] Like four to eight hours, they're already in the can and labeled. So they are so fresh. So they're packed in peatness with nutrition and you have them year round. I'm fortunate. I live in California. We get produce year round, but some parts of the country, you don't have access to that. Also, it's so much more cost effective.

[00:23:21] I have clients who are on a tight budget, getting some of these products like canned beans and canned lentils or frozen vegetables and frozen fruit can really stretch your budget out and you still enjoy great flavor.

[00:23:34] **Ginger Hultin:** Oh, such great points. There is very clear research that shows that canned fruits and veggies have equal or more nutrition than some fresh ones.

[00:23:43] And so it's a brilliant recommendation.

[00:23:46] **Vandana Sheth:** Sometimes. I have clients who have blood pressure issues and they're worried about the sodium. So something to keep in mind is just rinsing that out two, three times can decrease the sodium content in that can by 40%.

[00:23:58] **Ginger Hultin:** Absolutely. And then you can use those other herbs and spices that you were mentioning.

[00:24:02] I had one question though, when we're talking about cooking, a lot of my clients struggle with allergies or intolerances. So like nuts or soy or dairy, how do you handle overlapping allergies or intolerances with plant based diets?

[00:24:18] **Vandana Sheth:** It's totally possible to enjoy plant based foods, even if you have multiple food allergies.

[00:24:24] It comes down to what are you allergic to. So if you're allergic to some of the major allergens, the top nine, soy, dairy, wheat are part of that. That's not a problem. Instead of soy, you could do beans and lentils. Um, instead of wheat or gluten, you could do quinoa, you could do rice, but there are options.

[00:24:45] **Ginger Hultin:** Yeah, it's important to know that there are so many options. I think a lot of times people don't realize the breadth of different plant based options. One thing I did want to ask you though that I get asked all the time is sometimes people don't want to eat beans or lentils because they're really gas producing and they're, they, you know, they hurt people's stomachs.

[00:25:02] What do you, how do you help people increase their beans?

[00:25:04] **Vandana Sheth:** It's true. If you're not used to it, beans and lentils are phenomenal nutritionally speaking, but they also have a lot of fiber. If your gut is not used to that amount of fiber, you will have some side effects. It's about introducing it gradually.

[00:25:17] First of all, cooking it well. If you have a pressure cooker, cooking it in a pressure cooker can help break it down, can be easier to digest. And in Indian food, there's a spice or an ingredient called asafoetida. That's used commonly when you cook Indian food, uh, with beans and lentils, and that can help with decreasing the gas production in your gut.

[00:25:40] If, um, and if you've never tried it, it's available in an Indian store. It has a sulfuric smell to it. It almost smells like onion powder or garlic powder. but it has no sodium. It's just something that you add just a sprinkle to your beans or lentils when you're cooking. The other option is when you're introducing it, instead of having like a big bowl of chili with lots of beans, start with maybe a small amount and then gradually ease into the amount that your body is used to.

[00:26:07] **Ginger Hultin:** Yeah, that's a great, great tip. And I've never heard of that. Is it an herb or spice that you mentioned?

[00:26:12] **Vandana Sheth:** It's basically like dried gum, uh, like a resin. It's called asafoetida, A S A F E T I D A, and the Hindi, Indian word is hing, H I N G.

[00:26:25] **Ginger Hultin:** I am going to try that myself, and we'll also put a link to that in our show notes, so, so folks can grab it too.

[00:26:31] Yeah, and another thing in Indian food, often after a meal, you chew on something called like fennel seeds, and that's a mouth freshener, and that can also help as a digestive. If you add some ginger or have some ginger tea, that can help with digestion as well.

[00:26:46] I love it. Those are incredible tips and I think will make people feel more comfortable when they're eating more plant based and high fiber.

[00:26:53] But you have a cookbook. It's called My Indian Table. I love it. I use it all the time. I love the Curried Power Bowl and I really enjoy all the lentil based recipes now that we're talking about digesting beans and lentils. But I wanted to hear a couple of your favorite recipes that you make for yourself out of that book or what do you suggest to clients?

[00:27:13] **Vandana Sheth:** So if you're not familiar with Indian food, that often can be overwhelming because there are a lot of ingredients, lots of different lentils and beans, a lot of different grains. And so that's why I wrote the book to simplify that process with a simple ingredient list that you can mix and match and use in all the recipes.

[00:27:32] When it comes to my favorite of the recipes, I would say that curried parboiled is one of my favorites and it's not a traditional recipe. It's something I came up with. Um, it has. Cauliflower, it has garbanzo beans, it has spices that I love, and you can enjoy it as is, or put it over greens, or add some quinoa to it,

or rice to it, and maybe finish off with some raita, which is yogurt and cucumber sauce, and that can be really tasty.

[00:28:01] **Ginger Hultin:** That is perfect for meal prep, actually. It'd make a great lunch or to have like an easy dinner.

[00:28:07] **Vandana Sheth:** That curried parboiled is actually something you can totally make ahead of time and can even freeze well. And then when you take it out and refresh it, finish off with some herbs and a sauce on top.

[00:28:18] **Ginger Hultin:** I love that.

[00:28:19] Freshen it up with herbs. What other resources are you excited about or share with your clients? Like, are there any favorite people you follow, cookbooks, or sites that you suggest when folks are trying to become more plant based?

[00:28:33] **Vandana Sheth:** So, the Academy has some resources. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. I love the PCRM, Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine.

[00:28:42] They have a lot of resources, a lot of scientific studies, and of course, dietitian colleagues like you. I have a lot of friends online that I think are doing great work. There are so many dietitians who are doing really good work. So I would say if people are interested, start looking for someone who's credentialed, and then also look at what are they giving you in terms of ideas.

[00:29:04] Just for inspiration, you may not necessarily follow it exactly, but use it as an inspiration.

[00:29:09] **Ginger Hultin:** I mean, from recipes to evidence based articles and advice, or even one on one private practice help, there is help out there if you're, if people are feeling lost.

[00:29:19] **Vandana Sheth:** Yes, and that's something I would highly recommend if someone is considering going down this journey to becoming more plant based.

[00:29:26] Always a good idea to meet with a registered dietitian nutritionist, someone who specializes in this space, because they can look at what you're doing and help guide you. Come up with an action plan that's designed just for you. That way all your non negotiables are included and life as it happens is

taken into account so that you don't feel like you're on a diet but it's something that just lives with you.

[00:29:49] **Ginger Hultin:** And I had one other question just tying back to the cultural challenges, right, of being in the U. S. When you are helping folks or you're giving resources, do you have any tips for shopping in the U. S. for foods? Some of the ones you've mentioned today that that aren't available in like the standard grocery store.

[00:30:06] What do people do?

[00:30:07] **Vandana Sheth:** Yeah, so if someone comes to me from a different ethnic background, background. The first thing you want to do is ask about where they like to shop and what are some of the ingredients they're missing. And then let's look at our local grocery stores and see what could be used instead.

[00:30:23] And if I'm not familiar with that culture or that food, I'm going to ask them to describe it to me. But if it's someone with an Indian background, the first thing I tell them to do is list some of the things they like, and I can show them where they're available, whether it's their local Indian store, or fortunately now, many of those products are available in your regular grocery stores on Amazon, or at Trader Joe's, at stores that you wouldn't think of.

[00:30:48] And sometimes it's easier to go to those stores than drive away to your local ethnic store.

[00:30:54] **Ginger Hultin:** Right. I like to think it's getting better too. That's my hope.

[00:30:58] **Vandana Sheth:** No, I, I think so. Uh, I've been here now almost 32 years and I've seen a huge switch. I don't really go to the local Indian market very often because I can find most things at my regular American grocery stores, which is so cool.

[00:31:14] **Ginger Hultin:** That's fantastic. So, Vandana, let's wrap up with some tips about both increasing plants in our diets, but also how to advocate for culturally supportive health care and nutrition advice. Can you tell me three of your top plant based protein sources that people should be adding more into their diet?

[00:31:30] **Vandana Sheth:** I would say if I had to pick three, the first one would be beans.

[00:31:34] I don't know if beans and lentils are counted as separate or, you know, one, I love soy products, so I love tofu, tempeh, edamame, that fashion. And then if you do dairy, then I would say Greek or Icelandic yogurt could be an option, or even protein powders. There's so many great protein powders.

[00:31:55] **Ginger Hultin:** And I'd love to know how people can advocate for care that's culturally inclusive.

[00:32:00] It's just such an important specialty of yours. What advice do you have for our listeners who want to include important traditional foods in their diets?

[00:32:08] **Vandana Sheth:** First of all, your traditions, your culture are super important to your personal journey, your personal story. So don't let anyone tell you that you can't include those in your way of eating or living.

[00:32:19] So if you find yourself talking to a professional at healthcare, provider who does not pay attention to that or dismissive, then it's important to find someone else because that is your story. So you absolutely want to include your favorite cultural foods. You might have to make some tweaks so that you can enjoy it and maybe healthify it a little bit to decrease your risk for some chronic conditions.

[00:32:46] **Ginger Hultin:** Absolutely. Like, like the chai that you helped your client with.

[00:32:49] **Vandana Sheth:** Exactly. And it doesn't have to be complicated. Um, you can absolutely enjoy your favorite foods. It's about knowing how to make those tweaks and find a dietitian or professional who understands that.

[00:33:00] **Ginger Hultin:** On the next episode, we're going to go deeper into your work around diabetes.

[00:33:04] So let's end with this question for now. If people are making any kind of changes to the way they eat, maybe it's plant based or, you know, they have a new diagnosis like diabetes or IBS, it's important to still be able to eat the foods that make you feel like yourself, make you feel full that are your secret family recipe or your grandma's famous dish.

[00:33:25] How do you help clients eat healthy, but also stay true to cultural preferences and traditions?

[00:33:31] **Vandana Sheth:** It comes back to really recognizing what is most important to you, and if there's a specific food or a specific way of eating that is important to you, knowing that, and then figuring out what do you need to change, whether it's blood sugar, or whether it's related or heart health related, you can make those tweaks, but it's important to identify what's important and then how can we healthify that.

[00:33:56] So, for example, for blood sugar, it could be that we are making sure you're pairing your favorite traditional carbs with adequate protein and fiber, or if it's heart health related, maybe enjoying some of those plant based proteins might be a good thing. Swapping some of the traditional proteins that may be in a recipe, you know, that are higher in fat, higher in saturated fat, could be a good thing.

[00:34:17] So we can go down that path as well.

[00:34:19] **Ginger Hultin:** And one thing I really enjoy that you talked about was the non negotiables. You know, don't mess with this thing in my diet that's so important. So maybe we choose those and then decide how to make some swaps or adaptations so that we remain culturally relevant but also still meet health goals.

[00:34:35] **Vandana Sheth:** Yes, for sure. I believe food is very personal. And if you can enjoy your favorite foods in a way that's intentional, that gives you joy, but also helps you feel healthy, it's ideal.

[00:34:51] **Ginger Hultin:** In the next episode, we'll take a deep dive into Vandana's specialty, diabetes. Our show is sponsored by Orgain and produced in collaboration with Larj Media. That's L A R J Media.

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