

Matt Eastland:

Hi everyone, it's Matt Eastland here with the Food Fight podcast brought to you by EIT Food, a series exploring the greatest challenges facing our food system and the innovations and entrepreneurs dedicated to solving them. One of the most rewarding aspects of hosting a purpose-driven podcast is connecting with like-minded people around the world who are committed to making a difference. And recently I had the real pleasure of connecting with Justine Reichman, who's podcaster and founder of Next Gen Purpose. Her platform provides knowledge and resources for founders, entrepreneurs, restauranteurs, chefs, farmers, physicians, scientists, researchers, and eaters, all aimed at educating and sharing advice to better the world and our planet. And Justine has interviewed over 100 people on her Essential Ingredients podcast, gaining a wealth of knowledge about the entrepreneurial journey, food sustainability, and regenerative practices. So I'm really excited to have Justine on the podcast today to share the valuable lessons that she's learned. Justine, welcome to the show.

Justine Reichman:

Thank you. Thanks so much for having me here. I'm so excited and pleased to have a chat.

Matt Eastland:

Same here, can't wait. So I'm really interested in your journey today. So how, what was your purpose finding NextGen Purpose and what inspired you to create the platform?

Justine Reichman:

So a couple of years ago I was living in Mexico City, and that's where the journey of Next Gen Purpose started initially as Global Arts for Humanity, then Next Gen Chef, and now Next Gen Purpose. But when I think about the actual journey, I feel like I've been on it my entire life. I'll start with how it initiated in Mexico City when I was living there. One day I went in to go get my hair blown dry because, well, in Mexico it's cheaper to get your hair blown dry than it is to actually buy the shampoo. So anyway, one thing leads to another and this gentleman sitting in the salon says to me, so what are you doing here? And, you know, are you working? What are you doing? And I said, oh, well, my partner's a tech consultant and, well, I am a photographer, and I said it like I owned it, because literally the day before, somebody had said to me, oh, I love your Instagram, I love your photography, can we collaborate? And I said, sure. And they said, well, can you show us your portfolio or your website? I'm like, definitely, I'll send it to you tomorrow. So I went home and made a website. Right? Like an entrepreneur would. So when I'm talking to this guy now, and he's like, oh, wow, well, I work for the president of Olive Garden, Capitol Grill, and another restaurant. I said, oh, wow, that's very interesting. And he says,

and we work with an NGO that provides resources and education to lower income families so that they could be able to build their own gardens, sell some products and have enough left over for themselves and make enough to become self-sustaining. I was like, this is brilliant. They're like, would you like to come and take pictures for us or meet my CEO so that we can discuss? And I said, sure. So anyway, so I meet with these guys and a couple of days later we end up going three and a half hours away. They picked me up at my flat and we go in the car and we get up there and there's like goats and there's all these people with their houses and they're all making me food and as I go around they're all feeding me all these different kinds of things. And they're also showing me their gardens and how they maintain them and what they do. So I'm learning all about this and it really inspired me. So I said to the guy, you know, I have an idea, all this food is so good, we should do a contest. And I know a top chef in Mexico City who used to work for Jean-Georges. Anyway, it exploded and all these ideas came to fruition. And so that was the beginning of this. And so when you fast forward, if I come back to California, I'm like, what am I going to do now? And I realized that my mission was not just to educate and talk with people that were lower income, but that everyone needed the same information so that they could make better choices for themselves. So I started to work as an advisor and the director for the, it's an accelerator program, the Founder Institute. And so in helping all these other people start their entrepreneurial journeys and businesses, I equally was inspired to start a new one myself. And that's where I started this. And initially it was to help people that wanted to make food and make it in a better way. And then I realized that this mission was really bigger than that. So it evolved from supporting those entrepreneurs that wanted to cook to restaurateurs, to CPG companies, et cetera, and connecting them and creating vetted resources for them. So we originally launched, and we were doing a bunch of events at co-working spaces, and we had an online platform. And then it evolved further because of COVID, where co-working spaces were not an ideal location to come together and network. So we decided to create a Zoom platform, which everyone was doing. As we continued, I then said to a friend of mine, what do you think? Should we do a podcast? We can get a much broader audience. We can really share stories. We can inspire people to make the world a better place with access to information and inspire others by sharing different journeys of different founders.

Matt Eastland:

Amazing. So from a complete chance meeting in a hair salon through COVID, which I have to admit, I've had so many guests on the show where actually going through COVID, horrendous as it was, has kind of accelerated something or allowed people to pivot to somewhere else. So that's kind of taken to where you are now. Incredible. And your platform has three pillars, is that right? So it's better for you, better for the planet, better for all. So how do those pillars kind of guide your thinking and why have you divided it like that?

Justine Reichman:

Those pillars are integral to every guest that we have on the show. They don't necessarily need to meet all of the pillars, but they need to have a crossover somewhere so that we're sharing similar values.

Matt Eastland:

Got it.

Justine Reichman:

We all have different focuses, right? So mine is this platform to create better access. But I can't do this and make sure that I'm doing everything else and compost. I mean, I do compost, but you know, there's so many different things. If you do takeaway, there's always more plastic. So I felt like I was creating a niche for myself that was meaningful and could give people a platform to share information so others can choose from it what's meaningful and important to them.

Matt Eastland:

Yeah, got that. And it's exactly why we do the things that we do, right? I mean, this is all about sharing the best kind of science-based, evidence-based knowledge. So I'm totally with you. And we have to talk about regenerative agriculture and sustainability. It's a really big thing for us on the show as well, on The Food Fight. So we've had lots of episodes on the topic. On episode 135, I think it was, we had Wild Farmed on the show, so that's founded by one half of Groove Armada, Andy Cato, who is doing amazing things now, to go from one of the best dance acts, and I'm a massive fan, in the world, to now a regenerative farmer. So they're doing really great stuff, but we love having these kind of conversations about RegenAg particularly. So what was the draw for you in terms of regenerative food, that whole scene in sustainability? What kind of pulled you in?

Justine Reichman:

Well, you know, being exposed to organizations like Agricultural Institute of Marin and conversations like Kiss the Ground are exposing us to the practices and the way people are doing things and how unconscionable some of these things are, but equally the impact of changing them. to make them better for you and make them better for the planet and give us greater access. And so once I learned this information, I thought, wow, we really need to give a platform to this so that other people can better understand the choices they make and why this is so important.

Matt Eastland:

And you discuss those sort of various strategies on the articles you write and the podcast that you do for kind of enhancing

sustainability in food productions, food stewardship, those sorts of things. So are there any kind of critical steps you think the food industry need to take to become more regenerative? It's a kind of a recurring theme on the show in terms of how to push the food industry, who've obviously been doing things a certain way for a very long time, to push them to be more regenerative. So is there anything that you've learned that you think these organizations really need to do?

Justine Reichman:

I think that really the end consumers can help direct this a little bit. You know, your dollar and your choice will direct where people put their money and how they continue to build, right? So if the consumer and the end consumer is making the choice to purchase locally and regenerative, you know, and stops or makes fewer purchases along the other lines, we're going to have a greater need ultimately. So I think education paramount here. And then talking with the consumers to understand how much they know, what they don't know, fill in the blanks, and then hear what's important to them.

Matt Eastland:

I'm really glad you brought that up actually because we have a division here at EIT Food called the Consumer Observatory and they're basically our insights division and they've just produced a report about consumer knowledge awareness about regenerative and it was really interesting in the sense that what came back from the report like one of the headline findings is that Most consumers don't feel that there is a problem with traditional agriculture, conventional agriculture, because we all feel very proud about our farmers and people really look up to them and they don't feel that these things should be changed. up until the point where you then start talking to them about regenerative and start explaining how much better it could be and I just wonder if you've got a view on that and if you find the same thing for your work that consumers kind of feel that there isn't really a problem?

Justine Reichman:

I think that, you know, I live in a little bit of a bubble, so I use my platform to expand that. Because here in California, people are really very attuned to what's going on, right? But if you expand that conversation like we have with the podcast, whether mine or yours, I've learned that not as many people understand the implications or they don't understand the ramifications and the gravity to which the impact of what they're doing, what their choice makes. Oftentimes people feel like, oh, I'm not going to make an impact if I just do this small thing. But in all honesty, that's how we do make the greatest impact. So I don't think it's about making a complete change. It's about educating people so that they could decide what's important to them. And the rest will, I think, follow suit.

Matt Eastland:

Yeah, you're absolutely right. If lots of people make small choices, different choices, but we all do it at once, that's a huge impact, right, overall.

Justine Reichman:

And it's also less overwhelming and right because we can feel like we're participating in the success and the conversation and we're making a choice towards a better future without feeling like we're not participating and we're failing. Because oftentimes when you feel like you have to do everything, you don't feel like you're succeeding there and you're not making a difference. But I think the reality is, like we said, small changes and you just have a lot of people doing those small changes and you fit in your niche, the things will continue to evolve in a better direction.

Matt Eastland:

It's reminded me of a quote actually we had on the show, someone talking about community. I think they said, power less as an individual, power full as a community. So I suppose that kind of takes that a little bit further in that we can all do something, but if we all do it together in a community, like in your platform, then actually that's where you get the real change, which I really like. So from consumers to organisations, can you share any examples of companies or initiatives that are leading the way in regenerative agriculture and is there anything that other companies should be learning from them? Who's stepping forward in this space do you find?

Justine Reichman:

There's an organization that offers consulting for regenerative agriculture and there's also the Rodale Institute, right? And so having access to resources like this where you can pull them in to have a look at what you're doing and suggest changes so that you can build a regenerative system I think is key because it's really hard to understand And I think regenerative means different things to different people. So having access to the Rodale Institute or a consultant that can come in and help I think breaks it down in a more palatable way.

Matt Eastland:

What about policy, Justine? Because, I mean, it's all very well that we have, you know, the well-meaning individuals, you know, the organizations kind of trying to step up. But obviously, you need the right policy framework around you to make sure that these things are actually possible, that they're, you know, scalable, etc., etc. So, you know, how important do you think that is? And do you see a shift coming?

Justine Reichman:

Policy is super important, and it's actually part of some of our work's mission is to work towards helping to change policy through the information that we give to people through our platform, whether it's around healthcare, whether it's around agriculture, because I think they go hand in hand. And we'll talk about this later, but even with the docuseries that I'm doing, our goal is to ultimately collaborate with one of the organizations like vote.org where they already have the poll of people so that we can work towards leveraging that and the conversations we're having to help change policy.

Matt Eastland:

Love that. Business and investment, you know, so we've spoken a lot on the podcast about under-representation of women founders in the food system. So we've had Karen Karp on the show, who's actually based out in the States, episode 132, when talking about championing women leadership, and somebody from our own community, Shima Baraka on episode 65, where we spoke about gender bias. And I know this is a space that you're super passionate about. So I wanted to ask you, so one thing that kind of has stuck with me from these episodes is some of the really terrifying stats about women entrepreneurship and investment in the food system. So I think Karen mentioned women founders receive less than three percent of investment. I think that was pre-Covid and then Shima came on, I think she was talking maybe it's now gone down to two percent. So I guess I'm interested for your take, is the situation getting better? And how can the food industry create a more inclusive investment environment for women entrepreneurs?

Justine Reichman:

So I've gone to some lunches that are focused on women investing in women, right? But I also think it's really important to include everyone in those conversations. Men, all the different people, because I think that if we can get everyone to understand the gravity of this, that it's not just women just supporting women, but men supporting women too, I think we'll have a greater piece of the pie. Because we're talking about food that everyone eats. We're talking about innovation and changing the world. And everyone wants to see a better for you world, a better for you planet, and greater access to better food. So I think it doesn't matter who's creating the change. I think we need to support the right change.

Matt Eastland:

Yeah, completely agree. And I think what's the phrase? It's inclusivity of thought, right? It's like everyone's ideas are useful, valuable, et cetera. So yeah, I love that. And then broader, of course, than women, we're talking about kind of inclusivity and business investment more generally. So as someone yourself who's obviously got expertise in business investment separately, what What

kind of advice do you have for entrepreneurs looking to make a positive impact in the food industry? So we're not just talking about women entrepreneurs, we're talking about all of these different people who are coming on your show and are telling these amazing stories. What advice, what are you picking up from all these people that maybe you hear time and time again that you think everybody should know about?

Justine Reichman:

So I think that being scrappy shouldn't be overlooked. I think it's really important to be scrappy before you become strategic. But there is a time when you need to incorporate being strategic. But being scrappy is really integral to, I would say, being an entrepreneur. I think it should not be overlooked at all.

Matt Eastland:

And when you say being scrappy, do you, I mean, I know, obviously, I know, I know the term, but I mean, is anything specific that you mean that this is just getting the things done whenever you can get them done, doing things on a, on a budget, not trying to, you know, overblow things, all of that kind of stuff, or is there something particular about being scrappy in the food industry?

Justine Reichman:

Well, I think it's like, you know how I said I went home and made a website, and all of a sudden, that was really scrappy. It was not a great website, but I made it on Squarespace or something, and it was really easy. I didn't overthink it to say, oh, if I'm going to do this, I have to hire a designer, because I'm not a designer. Instead, I just did it. And I think that sometimes a common thread that I see with entrepreneurs is they just want to solve problems, and they just want to get it done. So I think it goes hand-in-hand with being scrappy.

Matt Eastland:

Got that, yeah. And we mentioned at the top of the show, I think off-camera, we were talking about your documentary, which I know is called Pursuit of a Cure. You've been following athletes, doctors, scientists and others across the globe to find cures for humanity's most challenging diseases, which sounds like you must have had an incredible experience, you know. I think last series we spoke to Dr. Bill Rawls, who if you don't know, you should really check him out. He overcame Lyme's disease by fixing his body inside out through cellular wellness. He calls it in episode 133. And I'm really interested in this space. So do you have any major takeaways from the documentary around the role that food and nutrition has to play in combating disease? What could and should we be doing differently, basically?

Justine Reichman:

The one thing I've learned is you can't do the right thing for the wrong person and the wrong thing for the right person, right? You need to understand everybody's individual intricacies, their issues, whether they're immunocompromised, whether they have high blood pressure. All these different things play a factor because it may change the way you eat, which could then change the way you feel. And to do this in supplement to everything else you're doing can only help. Right? So when we talk about the pursuit of a cure, for me it started because I've always been a caregiver for my mom when she had breast cancer and now she has ALS. And so obviously as a result she recovered from breast cancer, right? But some of the scariest things are false hope. and not understanding what a trial means, and also the reality of things. So those different things really hit home with me and made me wonder, how do I make better choices? Who do I ask the questions to? Because the internet is not your friend on this. I should be dead according to everything I've Googled about myself when I've had symptoms. You know what I mean? So it's really important to surround yourself with a team of people that can help make those choices with you or provide information and education, both because, you know, it's emotional but also because it's medical, right? And many of us are not doctors or don't have that resource. So that's what inspired my journey to create this docuseries, because whether it was my mom who had breast cancer or ALS anti-aging or Lyme's disease, there's all these different opportunities to try to deal with that. So I wanted to share these stories so that other people can understand how some people have done it, what's worked, what hasn't worked, and the role science plays in this and how we should lean into that to make better and more informed choices.

Matt Eastland:

And Justine, we're kind of coming to the close of the show, really, but it would be remiss of me not to ask you in terms of like about the future. So can you talk about some future projects or initiatives that you're really excited about in the realms of sustainable food and gender inclusivity?

Justine Reichman:

So we are looking to put together some limited series podcasts that focus on these issues because I think that it will really be targeted for people and give them a greater sense from experts of different experiences, different ideas on how these issues can be addressed.

Matt Eastland:

I watch this space and you've set this up really well Justine so I now have to ask so where can listeners find out more about all the work you're doing at Next Gen Purpose and the Essential Ingredients podcast and also how can people support the work that you're doing?

Justine Reichman:

A, you know, tune into Essential Ingredients, our podcast, which you can find on wherever you listen to podcasts. You can access our website at nextgenpurpose.com, where you will find information on all the different guests, access to the different episodes, as well as a link to our docuseries, Sizzle Reel, and then various articles that we publish to give people greater insight into the space. And if there's anybody out there that feels like they have a point of view that they want to share, we encourage you to connect with us because we love to share the information and we are the platform here to serve you guys.

Matt Eastland:

What a lovely, inclusive way to finish as well. Thank you, Justine. It's been a fab, fascinating conversation. I've really enjoyed it. I know that our listeners will too. So thank you very much for being on the show.

Justine Reichman:

Oh, thank you so much for having me.

Matt Eastland:

So that was Justine Reichman, founder of Next Gen Purpose and the host of the Essential Ingredients podcast on the show. Another amazing conversation. Just some takeaways that I've pulled out from that particular episode. So I think Justine's story is an inspiration to us all. You really just need to give it a go. From just a chance conversation that she had had in a hair salon, You know, she embraced it, she took it on, and that actually became the seed of the idea for her whole business. So I guess the message there is new things, if you embrace them, really can then become a passion and your direction in life. We spoke a lot about regenerative agriculture, which I know that Justin is really passionate about, and she made a very good point about the fact that Consumers can make a really big difference in this space to sort of grow regenerative agriculture by making small choices, but if we all do that together, that actually leads to big impact. We spoke about investment, particularly with regards to women entrepreneurs, and Justine's message there was that everybody really needs to be at the table. It doesn't matter your background, it doesn't matter where you're from, your gender, what we need here is inclusivity of thought because that always gives the best outcomes and then finally Justine's advice for all aspiring entrepreneurs out there is she said being scrappy shouldn't be overlooked and that strategy will follow so basically don't over complicate things do what Justine does you want to build a website build a website just it doesn't need to be perfect just get it done I think Following a great company, just do it, was Justine's advice there. So once again, thank you very much, Justine, for an amazing show. So thank you everybody for listening in once again. This has been the Food Fight

podcast. If you'd like to find out more, head over to the EIT Food website at www.eitfood.eu. Also, please join the conversation by the hashtag EIT Food Fight on our X channel at EIT Food. And of course, if you haven't already, please hit the follow button so you never miss an episode. Thanks very much everyone, see you next time.