

## John Kohler - Why Grow Your Own Greens?

Today, as a rare treat, I'm honoured to be speaking with OKRaw Youtube Legend and urban gardening advocate, John Kohler, about why we all need to get on our green thumbs!

John Kohler has been on a raw food diet for nearly 20 years. He turned to the raw food lifestyle to protect and improve his health after almost losing his life to a life-threatening illness known as spinal meningitis.

John was able to rebuild his health through the incredible benefits of a raw fruit and vegetable based diet and has enjoyed dynamic health ever since.

One of John's goals is to educate the world about the power of fruits and vegetables. To promote this message, he started one of the largest raw living food websites on the internet back in 1997 known as [www.rawfoods.com](http://www.rawfoods.com).

John is also considered an expert in raw food gadgets and appliances, which he reviews and offers on his web site, [Discountjuicers.com](http://Discountjuicers.com). He also shares practical tips on how to live healthfully on a raw, plant based diet through his video blog at [www.okraw.com](http://www.okraw.com).

John has produced over 1,700 YouTube videos on a variety of subjects that have been viewed over 41 million times. John also has over 262,000 subscribers combined across his 3 YouTube channels and has influenced countless others to make healthful changes in their lives.

John's main interests these days include growing his own food and teaching others how to as well on his highly entertaining video blogs. He has inspired thousands of people from around the world to start their own gardens and include more raw plant foods into their daily lives.

Welcome John!

**John:**

Thank you for having me.

**Anthea:**

John, You nearly died in your 20's. Can you tell us about that experience and why, in your opinion, you got so sick in the first place?

**John:**

Right after graduating from college, I had my whole life ahead of me and I was Broom Ball with my fraternity brothers and I just remembered getting really sick - flu like symptoms. I took an over the counter drug, which just made me sicker and I ended up going to the hospital. My parents drove me an hour to pick up to take me to the local hospital. I was admitted into the emergency room and before I was admitted, all I remember was throwing up, being in a wheelchair and passing out. I woke up in intensive care with intravenous IVs going into me and I asked the doctor when I was going to be getting out of there and he told me the news that nobody ever wants to hear that I might not make it out of there alive - I had spinal meningitis. Many people lose their lives from that. Even the best medical care at that point could not have helped me - it was not up to a doctor.

That really scared me and made me think about what was important in life. Even if I made a million dollars like everybody is always taught - be successful, you've got to be rich and have a lot of money. All the money in the world could not have saved me. I could not have wrote a check to the doctor 'Mr Dr, \$1million - do not cash unless John walks out of here'. Millionaires, Billionaires, lose their lives all the time - if they don't have their health, all the money in the world is not going to save them and they can't enjoy the other things in life - family, friends, cars, money - whatever they enjoy.

Luckily I was given a second chance, I can only say thank you to higher powers because that's why I'm here and I promised at the time I would live my life on a mission and live more in service. If money was not my goal, health was my true goal - I wanted also to be able to share this message with others. I believe it's one of my purposes and why I'm still alive and here today. Since 1995 when I started, I've been on a mission to help educate people about the power of fruits and vegetables and now I'm into it even more than ever, with especially gardening and growing food because I truly see gardening and getting in raw foods as it all, we wouldn't need much else.

The reason why I got sick in the first place is because when I asked the doctor when I was getting out of there walking away alive 'Dr, why did I get this disease when nobody else I knew had got it?' They had even sent people from the Health Department to interview me because it is a serious contagious disease and they don't want an outbreak and nobody else got sick. The doctor told me I had compromised immune deficiency, you have a chronically weak immune system and you're more susceptible to picking up any diseases than the others.

Listeners might remember a film in the 70s by John Travolta, The Boy in the Bubble where the boy in the bubble literally had to live in a bubble. I'm not that bad but a normal person has a good immune system, I'm somewhere in between. That's when I thought I was screwed - a weak immune system, I could lose my life next time - but I didn't want to accept that and I encourage everybody out there that has a health challenge not to necessarily accept what the doctor is telling them because I believe there's always a way to figure out an answer or solution to whatever your problem is.

I didn't want to accept that I had a weak immune system dealt a bad hand through my genes and I vowed to figure out how to build my immune system and I had no clue as to how to do this. I was in my 20s and it took a bit of time but I found out that you are what you eat. Even though I was a pretty good vegetarian who still ate chicken and fish but didn't eat red meats, and read my ingredient levels like we are all told to and not supposed to eat things with the big preservative words, I still got sick and so I knew I needed to go further and that's what led me to get into seeing an infomercial on TV with The Juice Man and I got a juicer off the infomercial and started juicing my way to health which was my first step.

**Anthea:**

It sounds like you had a horrific experience - a lot of people come to raw foods with pretty dire health circumstances. I'm sure a lot of people can relate to wanting to give something back to the world after having been to hell and back so to speak.

So you started juicing and then what happened? Could you tell us a bit about your early experience with raw foods?

**John:**

I got started with raw foods by juicing and even when I learned first about raw foods I heard the one thing that prematurely ages you faster than anything else is cooked foods. Don't put cooked foods in your body and when I originally heard that phrase, I thought 'this guy is a whack job; I'm not going to listen to this. Everybody I know eats cooked food, nobody eats this raw foodstuff'. So I didn't want to listen to that but I would flip over the tape and it would say, 'for your skin, juice parsley, carrots and apples' and so I was into the recipes but little did I know, by simply taking it out and not eating my normal breakfast by drinking 5 cups of carrot juice every day or whatever other juices I was making at the time, I was eating and increasing my fresh fruit and vegetable consumption. Later I would have my normal lunch and then later in the afternoon, I'd have a mid-afternoon snack of as much fresh juice as I'd want - usually carrot juice and then for dinner I would just have a normal dinner. But there, two of main meals were literally as much fresh juice as I wanted and now I was packing in 5-10 lbs of carrots every day and that's a lot of produce to be putting in, especially when you're not used to it.

That was first step, and then I got into cleansing because I learned juicing was so good. I learned about the rise and shine cleanse - got on a cleanse to cleanse out my colon and once again, in the Rise and Shine book, he talked about this raw foods thing and I still wasn't quite open to the whole idea of raw foods but he said, if you're going to go on this cleanse, you could heal your skin condition. I had allergies - eczema and asthma since I was a child - these are also autoimmune conditions that the doctors also blamed on my genes. He said I could get rid of my skin condition and that had been a big challenge for me my whole life, especially as a child getting teased because my skin was so dry.

Basically I decided to go on the cleanse. He said you could build your immune system and rebuild your body and I needed to do that because I didn't want to end up in the hospital again and actually being sick I look at as one of the biggest blessings that ever has happened to me in my life because if it didn't happen to me, I wouldn't be where I am today. I wouldn't be as healthy as I am today, I wouldn't be in a position to help so many other people in life either. I'd ask people out there if they are sick at this time, think of it as a blessing because now you're here and you're open and ready to learn better information to improve the quality of your life, not just the health, but your life in so many other ways.

I did the cleanse and my skin cleared up. My asthma was gone, I had very few allergies any more and I just felt great. At that point, I knew that this was the diet I really need to get on. At the time, there was natural hygiene style raw foods, or there was Ann Wigmore style raw foods so I ping ponged back and forth a little bit and took pieces out of each of the different programs and incorporated that into what I do and, even to this day, I'm still learning and modifying my diet and what I'm doing. I would encourage everybody out there to not just settle on what you are doing but if you learn new information and always be open to learning the information, if you find something that is working a little bit better, then use that.

On this conference call series, you're going to have a number of different raw food speakers and pioneers and I want to encourage everybody listening to take what you can out of each speaker, even if you don't follow their program exactly, every speaker on here is going to have some piece of knowledge that's going to help you on your quest to increase your health and increase your energy - to lose weight or to get to where you want to be.

**Anthea:**

You've maintained a 99.9% raw diet for twenty years now, while others struggle...If you were to start all over again, what is one thing you would do differently to ensure your success at staying raw?

**John:**

For me, in the beginning years, it was sheer will power - almost losing your life will set you straight really fast. To me, it was like 'okay John, if you eat raw/live foods, you're going to be alive and if you eat cooked foods and foods that are not alive, guess where you're going to be? You're going to be 6 feet under'. That's a big carrot on a stick motivation and I want to encourage everybody out there to have a really strong reason why you're doing this. Whether this is to get over an illness, whether this is because you are overweight, you have type 2 diabetes that I've seen many people overcome by eating simply fruits and vegetables so that you can be healthier, to live a longer life to see your grandkids graduate high school or get married. Have a really important reason.

I've been 99.999% since 1995 and I'm not perfect. I've had some big break ups and some emotional eating where I ate baked potatoes and steamed vegan McDougall oil free burritos and I really felt how that affected me and I encourage everybody to take every experience in their life as a learning experience. If you are eating raw and you're able to do it a couple of days, feel how that feels. Keep a food journal, a food diary on how you feel. I ate this food and I felt great after and then inevitably, everybody messes up. We have all these taste sensations and emotional eating things that I'm not an expert on by any means and you're going to eat something else and notice how that makes you feel and correlate this in your head. 'Wow, when I eat raw food, I feel full of energy and could get up and run marathons' and many people do 'and when I ate the cooked foods, I just felt like sleeping'. One of the biggest meals of the American year, Thanksgiving is coming up and people always get tired because that is a lot of food and cooked food and heavy foods take a lot of energy to digest and raw foods and juices and blended smoothies are the easiest. They basically give you tons of energy.

The final point that I want to mention to people is that it is not about all raw or no raw. I want everybody out their listening to increase their raw percentage in a slow and consistent manner so that when you backslide, you're already at a good standing point. If your goal is to go 100% raw and you can't do it, then you go back to all cooked and all crap junk food, that's not the solution, that's not a good thing to do. It would be far better to just say 'hey, this week, I'm just going to eat one extra apple per day' and eat one extra apple every day this whole week and then just keep doing that the next week and that's one more piece of fruit or vegetable that you are eating, getting into you that you would have otherwise not eaten.

The following week, do two apples or two pieces of fruit or a green smoothie or a green juice and slowly and incrementally increase your raw food percentage so that you're always building on something. When they build a house, they build a strong foundation first. Doing this ping pong all raw no raw cleansing - go back to juice fasts - in my opinion it doesn't work and it's not healthful for the body in the long run.

**Anthea:**

It's good to hear your very human experience and how you fell off in the beginning and you had emotional eating times. We can all relate to that and I think we often think of long term raw foodists as being somehow holier than thou - it's nice to see that you're real and human just like us.

So John, people are time poor, they lead busy lives. Why should they invest time in learning how to grow their own food? Why is it important in your opinion?

**John:**

On YouTube, Grow Your Greens, I have almost 1000 videos now and the first one that shows up if you're not subscribed to my channel is 12 Reasons Why You Should Start

Growing Your Food. The most important one for me is to increase and better my health. I strive to live my life by CANI - Constant And Never-ending Improvement. That means, whatever I'm doing today, I'm going to do better tomorrow and after being on a fruit and vegetable based diet, which is in my opinion, the best diet on Earth, organic food which is really good and even stuff from the farmers' markets, I couldn't really improve my diet by changing what I'm eating, because I'm already eating the best stuff but what I could change was the quality of the food I'm eating. This is something that is not often talked about in raw food. I doubt any other speaker or presenter that you are having on this conference series will be talking about this like I am because I am so passionate about always trying to reach out and get every possible advantage for myself so that I will not end up in the hospital again.

Literally, I've done a lot of research and growing your own food is one of the most important things you can do to have a higher quality of food that literally money cannot buy. I don't care if you're a millionaire, you could buy the most expensive crap at wholefoods that's just overpriced by 3 times in most cases and, even though you are paying a lot of money, it doesn't mean it's the best because the agriculture system in the United States and many other places in the world is messed up because it's all monetized and people are growing food for money and when you grow food for money and you've got to make a profit, you have to cut costs, and when you cut costs, quality goes down the tubes.

What many people don't realise is that by simply growing your own food, there's a study that I saw that literally in the same green beans bought at a store versus a home grown green bean, not even grown under the ideal conditions, but in good soil, the green bean had 50% more protein. The protein alone was 50% more so if you think you can't get enough protein on greens, you could eat half as much and still get your protein and you can get enough protein from greens and fruits and vegetables. In addition, besides the protein, which in my opinion is not even something we should focus on because protein is not that important - we get enough as long as we are eating enough calories.

What is an issue and what many American's and many people listening on this call are deficient in, in my opinion, are the phytochemicals and phytonutrients and more specifically also the trace minerals. These things are not in the food. When you pick food, ship food, phytochemicals and phytonutrients and some vitamins decrease over time so people are eating somewhat deficient food. Eating fruits and vegetables, even organic, from wholefoods, is definitely better than eating McDonalds but it's not as good as going out to your front yard, picking your food and putting it into your mouth two seconds later - and growing it in the highest quality soil. Literally I produce food that has 50% more minerals and probably more than 50% in some cases of certain trace minerals.

People think if you are a raw foodist, you need supplements. In an ideal world, 200-300 years ago, nobody took supplements - the soils were really rich and they were not depleted because there wasn't all this erosion. There was not chemical fertilisers and

even organic agriculture, if you think about it, if you thinking if you eat organic, you're eating alright and you're getting trace minerals and all this kind of stuff, that's not always the case in most situations from what I've seen. Organic agriculture, they're not putting the required nutrients or trace minerals back in the soil because literally standard agriculture does not know about some of the things that I've learned about that I share in my gardening channel.

For me, it's about getting the highest quality foods so that I can be the healthiest, so that I can be here for many years to come to share this information and also to have a wife, raise a family and all of the other things that I want to do in life. It's also a lot more convenient to go right outside my front door and my backyard to pick my food than having to go to the grocery store to eat and if you set it up properly and invest in yourself. It is an investment in yourself and your garden - it will pay you back time and time again.

In some places in the United States, for a bunch of greens, it might cost \$3 for a bunch of kale but I have all the kale I could eat ever in my back yard growing 365 days of the year. I will never have to buy kale again. After I got the kale situation under control and I'm growing kale, then I go 'okay, what else can I grow?' so now I grow Swiss Chard all year round. I grow cucumbers in the summer time, same with tomatoes, peppers and eggplant and I grow a lot of different herbs. Herbs are one of the most expensive things to buy so I save a lot of money. Those are my two main criteria. You're going to save some money in the long run because you have to eat every day and you are going to have higher quality food that money can't buy so that you can have the best health ever.

**Anthea:**

Fantastic reasons and certainly money is a big one for people right now. It's difficult to grow Basil year round in Australia if you don't have a greenhouse, I bought a bit of Basil and it cost me \$5 and it's hard to use it in that time.

And why the emphasis on greens? Some people find it hard to eat a lot of veggies and some veggies (for instance Brassicas - broccoli, kale, cauliflower) are hard to digest and may even cause thyroid issues.

**John:**

People go to work and get money and then once they have got the money, they are trading their time for money and then they trade their money for food. Instead of having to work to have time to make money, I'd rather just grow my food and avoid going to work.

I don't have any food spillage. You go to the store and you buy the Basil, that stuff goes bad. In my garden right now, I have so much Basil that I can't even eat it all and it just continues to grow and grow until the frost comes. There is literally no food

spillage and everything that does spoil or does get old, goes back into my soil to rebuild my plants.

The emphasis on greens is very important. Dr Joel Fuhrman came up with a system known as the ANDI scoring system. If you go into any whole foods in the United States that uses this system to score many things. It stands for Aggregate Nutrient Density Index and this index, he ranks all the foods in relationship to nutrients to calories - at the bottom of this list is things like junk foods and sodas, which rank at a 1 and at the top of his list with the most valued food on his list in his eyes are the leafy greens. I came up with this many years ago - greens have the most minerals, phytochemicals and phytonutrients - they are also the most healing in my opinion.

Many of the programs like Ann Wigmore - the wheatgrass juice and high greens diet, way back then learned that greens were very healing and the things like the brassica and the allium or garlic and onions family have even been proven and shown to help prevent cancer. The fact of the matter to me is that people on raw foods focus on fruits and eat a lot of fruits but it's really hard to get people to keep their greens up - they taste horrible and granted, if you're buying kale at the grocery store, or even organic at wholefoods, it tastes like crap, I can barely eat that stuff, it's so bitter and nasty and horrendous. The greens when you are buying them, like you bought the basil which is also another green, is very expensive - because they don't travel and ship well. In general fruits are much less expensive to buy. You could probably buy a couple of pounds of apples for the same price as that small little piece of basil. Or you can buy a bunch of apples because they are easier on the labor to harvest them and greens take so much more labor and tender care from the people growing them.

The greens have the most nutrition and also are the most labor intensive to grow, they also sell for a lot of money but on the flipside, this is something very easy that everybody can grow. It's super easy to grow greens. For example, if I were to grow a tomato plant outside, I could plant a tomato seed, it would grow the plant and once the greens start to emerge, I can't eat the green on the tomato plant because it is toxic, you'd then have to wait for it to make a flower and then make a fruit, and then, finally when the fruit is ripe, you could pick eat and eat it - it's so much time.

With greens, you could literally grow them from seed and have micro-greens in as little as ten days - and you could be eating your food in 10 days. It's super easy, super accessible for everybody and also encourage and get more people to eat greens which are really nutrient dense - have a lot of phytochemicals and phytonutrients - many of yet are undiscovered.

As you've mentioned, some brassicas are hard to digest. If you are eating full sized broccoli heads or cauliflowers - they can be hard to digest. That's why I like to juice them, to break them down or sometimes I blend them also - or make sure you chew really well. That's why we do have teeth; to break them down into the smallest particle size. While I do eat a raw foods diet, I believe any way you can get more greens and vegetables in you, including things like slow cooking, or steaming or



boiling, which are the best cooking methods in my opinion, is a good thing because I'd rather have you guys eating steamed greens than hamburgers, hotdogs and processed and junk foods.

I think it's far better to eat them raw and what I've learned as a gardener, is that when you grow kale or cauliflower or broccoli and you let the plant grow and it takes a long time to make that cauliflower flower as we are used to eating or that broccoli that we are used to eating but as it's growing, it makes leaves and, unlike that tomato plant where we can't eat the leaves, as soon as the broccoli or cauliflower plant is growing, we can harvest the baby leaves.

The baby leaves are more tender, they're easier to digest, they digest so easily, and they almost melt in your mouth when they are really small and young. They are easier to digest and have the same nutrients as the full mature plant in some cases, even more nutrients.

For example, the micro-grains that you could grow with broccoli seeds or cauliflower seeds have 4 - 40 times more nutrients than the mature plant.

**Anthea:**

While you are talking about ANDI, it made me think of the Woodstock Fruit Festival that instruments that you brought out in your talk that measures the nutrient value. Can you talk a bit about that?

**John:**

I give a talk about that will soon be on my YouTube channel - on obtaining the highest quality food on a raw foods diet. The easiest tool that we have and are all given free and clear are out tastebuds. If something tastes really good, then in general it has more nutrients in it. We've gotten those tomatoes that are pink or bounce and they don't taste very good and they don't have a lot of nutrients. The tomatoes that are bright red, out of the garden you eat, they just explode with flavor - those are the phytochemicals and phytonutrients you are tasting.

I am a gadget geek and nerd and I like tools and instruments that can show me and measure my progress. In my garden, I try to grow food and I try to somehow test the food to see easily, without having to send it off to a thousand dollar lab test to see the nutrients in there. A quick and easy way to determine how good the food is that I'm growing I use a meter called a refractometer - Ebay and Amazon sells them - Brix brand - they are about \$30. You can look online for the Brix chart pdf and it shows you many different common fruits and vegetables.

The higher the level on the scale, the better the nutrient value - you squeeze a bit of juice off and put it on the refractometer and look up into the light and you'll get a number and you can correlate that. My goal is to grow the highest quality foods and if

they are not, then I need to determine why. Many people think that Brix is just the sweetness but the numbers are not just the sugar content alone, it's a measure of the total dissolved solids, which include other nutrients in the produce that you are measuring.

I like to take my Brix meter to the farmers' market and in peach season, test the peaches from one seller to another, not only measuring the number itself but also seeing the amount of dissolved minerals and, of course, I also use my tongue to compare which ones are good on the Brix meter but also which ones taste good to me as well.

**Anthea:**

What are your recommendations for people who don't have a lot of space? In your videos you talk a lot about using raised garden beds. Why are raised garden beds so important for veggie growing?

**John:**

If you are in an apartment, townhouse or condo - or if you do have space but just don't want to garden outside, I recommend everybody listening to this call starts growing micro-greens today. Micro-greens can be grown inside your house with standard fluorescent shop lights that are available pretty much everywhere. The thing with micro-greens is that they like the climate that we like so they will grow really easily. Growing indoors - we don't have the elements, bugs, pests either. You can grow enough to sustain yourself to make a dent in the amount of greens you need to be eating and buying.

I do have a video on [GrowingYourGreens.com](http://GrowingYourGreens.com) that talks about growing microgreens and has a step by step how to do that. Container gardening - that's more fun, I don't think you could really grow a substantial amount of food. You could grow some herbs because they are expensive to buy and grow really well even in low light situations. Then you'd be pretty set.

Raised beds are very important for vegetable gardening if you do have some amount of space. If you just plant in your yard, you don't know what is in the soil. You don't know the nutrients, you don't know if it's been sprayed with RoundUp or some other chemicals, you don't know if there is contamination of heavy metals in the soil from the lead paint used on your house. That's why I like to build a raised bed on top of an existing lawn/soil and then bring in good nutritious soil and add things to the soil such as worm castings, rock dust, sea minerals in the kelp meal and beneficial biology such as microbes and fungi which helps digest all the food in the soil and make it bioavailable for the plants, then you exactly know what you are getting, what you are growing in so that you will be successful.

Your garden will only be as healthy as the soil is and we are only going to be as healthy as the food we eat. If you eat at McDonalds, you're not going to be as healthy as if you ate a fruit and vegetable based diet and if you just put your plants in the space outside, not knowing what is there, they may not have all the nutrients they need to fully thrive. This year has probably been one of the best years for growing peppers - my plants are over 6 feet tall.

In a raised seed bed, you can also grow things closer together than what the packets recommend - so you can grow a lot of food in a 4' x 4' area. My raised beds are 4' x 16' and I have four of them in my back yard and I have other sizes as well. In one of those, I have nearly 60 pepper plants. I have so many peppers - but I know what to do with them.

**Anthea:**

So John, Soil fertility is pretty important for great produce. What are the best things we can use to improve our soils?

**John:**

Number 1 is organic matter. We need to replace our organic matter, we are losing it at an incredibly fast rate, especially with conventional farming, that's just putting chemical fertilisers in and they're not worried about the organic matter. We have to put all our food scraps back in the soil, I don't care if that means digging a hole and throwing them in - it's not the best way but at least it's an easy way that everybody can do. I compose my food scraps in a tumbling compost bin which I find to be the most efficient. I have worms that eat my food scraps.

Through compost - whether you are buying it or making it yourself. There is thermo-compost and fungal-dominated compost - they are both equally important in your garden for success.

Trace minerals for soil fertility. I don't want to have to take a Centrum A-Zinc of trace minerals to supplement my diet. If we did have a proper diet, I believe we would get all our nutrients from food; that's how man that's been living on Earth for millions of years, up until recent times, before they starting selling supplements did it. They also had a lot more fertile soil than they do now. I try to put back in the soil 70-90 different trace minerals, where modern agriculture, for the most part, puts in 3 minerals. When you are growing in 3 minerals, you're going to get imbalanced food, much like we get unbalanced people when they are eating a fast food junk food diet - because they are not getting all their nutrients. Putting 3 minerals back into the soil, we get unbalanced food which can be high in nitrate which can cause some challenges; my mom had to stop eating nitrate ridden hot dogs as a child because she saw that it caused stomach cancer. If you eat enough fruits and vegetables grown conventionally with high nitrates, that may also be a problem. I just saw a recent study that there is cadmium because of some of the chemical fertilisers being used.

Having the optimal trace minerals in the soil helps your plants to be healthy, to grow bigger and to yield more. And then they transfer those minerals to you in a suitable form from the plants. Your food will taste better.

Besides the rock dust and ocean minerals I use, the final thing is earthworm castings. Earthworm castings are what should be there in the garden naturally but with wiping out all the biology, the earthworms go away. The bacteria and the fungi in them are some of the catalysts for breaking down the organic matter and giving plants disease and pest resistance and are better able to absorb the minerals in the soil.

**Question from Steve:**

Do you eat weeds and wild edibles?

**John:**

I do eat some weeds and wild edibles - I'm not an expert, I'm learning about new ones all the time. I would encourage people to eat the weeds that you know are edible. There are many local walks you can go on where you can learn, touch and feel what they are. There are also many books. I try to go out on wild weed walks with experts and then when on them, I'll go collect the seeds while I'm on the walk of the ones that I know and then I'll bring them back to my garden so now I have these wild weeds growing under the best soil to have. This is the easiest garden to grow - if you tend and nurture them, they will flourish and provide you with a lot of food.

**Anthea:**

How do you know the ones you are picking are not poisonous - how did you educate yourself on that?

**John:**

It just comes through experience - I would encourage people not to pick anything that you do not 100% know what it is. I've gone out on walks; I've experienced a lot of different things. I've tasted a plant once and if I taste it again I know 'those are lambs quarters'. If you just get to know the top five common weeds in your area that are edible. Pretty much everyone knows dandelion, chickweed, lambs quarters, clover and wild grasses.

You've got to get out there, start taking a class and familiarise yourself with wild foods in your specific area. Green Dean (YouTube) is the wild foods expert.

**Question from Jenny:**

Besides the freezer part of your refrigerator, do you have a separate stand-alone freezer for freezing all the fresh produce you grow and buy?

**John:**

I have a French door refrigerator because it has a large refrigerator compartment and also on the bottom, it has a smaller freezer. I'm a big advocate of eating foods as fresh as possible so all the food that I grow, I do not harvest until I am going to eat them. If you go to the store, you have to buy them and you put them in your fridge to preserve them, I just keep them growing on my plant until I am ready to harvest and eat them so I have very minimal, if any, food spoilage that way. I do not believe in freezing your food unless absolutely necessary to preserve it, so of the harvest that I grow, I barely freeze any of it. I like to use it and juice it as is. For example, things like tomatoes and peppers that I grow too much of, that I can't eat all at once, instead I like to dehydrate them so then I do not need to use electricity to keep them preserved and all the dried foods has a good nutrient quality in there.

The next thing I'm going to be looking into in the next year, they are making home freeze-drying machines for your produce, which will keep a higher level of nutrients in the food.

**Question from Lacey:**

In some of your videos, you've talked about using a probiotic. If you eat a fully raw diet, why do you need a probiotic? If raw is optimal, you shouldn't need a probiotic - your intestinal flora should already be good, especially after 19 years.

**John:**

Everybody has a different opinion on things. I know friends of mine have been doing raw foods who don't do any probiotics and all I can say to that is that I like to try to think critically about things. In an ideal world, if we lived 200 years ago, we would not need to eat probiotics but my whole thing is that I don't want to just have good health, I want to have excellent health and if eating a probiotic can help bring me back into balance or help me in some way to get me flora that might not normally be there - because if you are eating a fruit and vegetable based diet, all the fruits and vegetables act as prebiotics and will may even have beneficial microbes within them. From example, I've that on lychee skins, there is a beneficial/probiotic yeast that we get and so if you are not eating these lychees from a certain place that has this certain yeast that's not occurring everywhere, you can get this yeast in you, not a candida yeast, to help you digest your food, I'm all for that.

So I take certain probiotic supplements that I feel can help me. I take them a couple of times per week when I feel the need but in addition, I also take them as 'medicine' for specific conditions. For example, I'm travelling in Costa Rica, I eat something funny, I get a bad stomach ache and I know what that is - so I could sit there and weather the storm and let it pass, but I'd much rather drop 4 probiotic capsules and within an hour, I feel fine.

Probiotics are such a critical part of our immune system and our digestive system - I want the best life and I want the best probiotics to do what they do and I believe that on the best raw food diet, you may not be getting all the probiotics you need because of the food system - if you buy food, it's so sterile - they've washed it so many times and it does not have the probiotic levels of things that it would if it were growing out of nature. One day, if I'm growing all my food and I've brought in every kind of produce that will attract every kind of beneficial organism and yeast in my orchard, I might stop taking probiotics but, until that time, I'm going to take probiotics as I feel they are necessary and I would encourage everybody to see how they feel after they take them.

Some people may like them, some people may not and that is completely up to you. I feel good and great after I take the probiotics that I do.

**Anthea:**

Great advice to listen to your intuition and understand that the soils are not what they used to be.

Food sovereignty is also pretty important to you. Can you talk a little bit about that? What it means and why it's so important? What, do you think, are the most important things people can do to gain control of their food supply?

**John:**

Food sovereignty is something that should be very important to everybody. Food sovereignty is having the choice to eat what you want, when you want and not being dictated that to you, especially in these times with genetically modified foods. Big companies are growing food and basically, they grow the food and sell it and it gets out to people and agriculture and industries choose what people are eating - I've heard all these conspiracy theories that it's going to be illegal to grow your own foods. They want control of the food system because they understand that, if they control the food system, and they control what people are eating, they are going to control you.

That's what many are being sucked into right now. You can control what you eat to some extent - you can choose to eat McDonalds, you can choose to eat that processed vegan cheese dog, you can choose to eat fruits and vegetables right now. I would always encourage you to eat the best and highest quality food - fruits and vegetables are by far the best out there. In the grocery stores and even local farmers market - but to go even more sovereign than that is controlling the seeds. I have over 100 varieties of tomatoes that I could plant at any single time but if you go into the store in the middle of winter, you might be able to buy round beefsteaks that taste like nothing, and some romas and maybe some camparis that are grown in a green house or even some cherry tomatoes.

This year, I'm growing over 60 varieties of pepper - each one tastes different. If the powers that be want this to happen, they might say only this pepper can be grown ever and we're going to miss out on all the different phytochemicals, phytonutrients and taste sensations from all the different varieties. This is what agriculture is doing; they are growing foods specifically. For example, a tomato that could be picked early, that could still taste halfway decent - that could ship, could bounce, it's not going to explode, it's not going to go bad, so that they could still make their profit. So for whatever reason, whether it is financial, or more sinister genetic reasons, people are trying to control the food system and it's so important to remain independent of them and have the power and exercise the right to grow your own food, save your own seeds and pass those seeds on to others. If people do not get involved in growing their own food then that leaves it up to others and when others are doing it, they're doing it for profit and then your best interests are not at hand.

**Anthea:**

I highly recommend that people watch your videos on YouTube - GrowingYourGreens - and maybe set a little challenge to watch one per day or week. How else can they connect with you for inspiration and advice?

**John:**

I have three YouTube channels - GrowingYourGreens is one - that's where I teach about growing your garden. I make a couple of them a week and have nearly 1000 there. I have around another 100 on my raw foods channel - Raw Foods - where I teach about the different appliances - juicers, blenders and hydrators - that allow you to eat and include more fruits and vegetables in your diet which supports me at DiscountJuicers.com. If you do need to buy a juicer or blender and you buy from me, that helps me to continue to do the work that I love and make the videos and put them out for free. My last channel has about 350 videos - raw foods, health diet and lifestyle and various subjects. Every video I guarantee you will learn something new - OKRaw.

**Anthea:**

It's been such a gift to be chatting with you, John. I really appreciate all the work that you're doing in this movement. Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with all of us today.

**John:**

Thank you. My pleasure.

**Anthea:**

Thanks for being on the call everyone. Goodbye.