



**The Good Clean Nutrition Podcast
Episode 11 Show Notes**

Episode 11: Brain Food: Exploring the Gut-Brain Axis with Uma Naidoo, MD

Welcome to today's episode of *The Good Clean Nutrition Podcast*, hosted by integrative dietitian and nutrition educator Mary Purdy, MS, RDN. When it comes to nutrition and diet, people tend to only consider their physical health – but a growing body of research shows that what we eat can significantly impact our brain health. To discuss the role the microbiome plays in our cognitive and psychological health, we are joined today by Uma Naidoo, MD.

Dr. Naidoo is a Harvard-trained psychiatrist and professional chef, and is the first Nutritional Psychiatrist recognized by The American Psychiatric Association. After graduating as a medical doctor, she completed her training at the Harvard Longwood Psychiatry Residency Training Program. Dr. Naidoo founded, and is the director of, the first hospital-based Nutritional Psychiatry Service in the U.S. and is also the Director of Nutritional and Lifestyle Psychiatry at both Massachusetts General Hospital and General Hospital Academy, while serving on the faculty at Harvard Medical School. In addition, Dr. Naidoo is the national bestselling author of *This Is Your Brain on Food*.

As the conversation gets underway, Dr. Naidoo shares that her interest in healthy eating habits stemmed from her parents and grandparents during her childhood. When she began her residency and training in psychiatry, she realized that the industry was seriously leaving out other tools for health. From there, she began forming a clear view of what people were eating and the impact it had on their bodies and mental health. She defines nutritional psychiatry as the recognition of the scientific evidence growing and evolving behind using whole foods and nutrients to improve your mental wellbeing. It is inclusive and complementary to other methods one may be engaged with. There is no one size fits all for the human condition, and this is where food can be a powerful tool.

People think of feeding the brain, but we are also feeding the gut, which then communicates with the brain in the gut-brain axis. Dr. Naidoo explains this idea and the role of the microbiome. Our gut microbes are hungry for nutritious food to create short chain fatty acids as well as brain communicating factors, which positively impact mental health, sleep, circadian rhythm and more. They thrive on fiber and dislike processed foods, artificial sweeteners and trans fats. Then, she elaborates on the connection between diet and conditions such as depression and anxiety, and the importance of biodiversity.

Involving our kids in the process of food preparation is the best way to help instill healthy habits and understanding of nutrition. It's also important to ensure they have access to healthy and delicious snacks. Pivoting to discussing the ways to combat cognitive decline as we age, Dr. Naidoo explains neuroinflammation and the power we have in rewiring our brains through our diet. For people looking to get started on their health journey, she advises to start slow when instilling habits to last a lifetime.



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Connect with Dr Naidoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#), and visit her [website](#).

Check out Dr. Naidoo's book, [This is Your Brain on Food](#).

Check out the [American Psychiatric Association](#).

Learn more about [Nutritional and Lifestyle Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital](#).

Learn more about the [MIND Diet](#) by Martha Clare Morris.

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