Balance365 Episode 301 Transcript

ANNIE BREES (INTRO)
Welcome to Balance365 Life Radio, a podcast that delivers honest conversations about food, fitness, weight, and wellness. I'm your host Annie Brees, along with co-founder Jennifer Campbell. Together, we have a team of personal trainers and nutritionists who coach 1000s of women daily and are on a mission to help women feel happy, healthy, and confident in their bodies on their own terms. Join us here every week as we discuss hot topics pertaining to our physical, mental, and emotional well-being with amazing guests. Enjoy.

ANNIE
Welcome back to another live Q&A where we answer your questions about health, wellness, and weight loss. Today's question was from a woman who shared that her weight loss had stalled. She asked us, "What are your thoughts on low-fat or fat-free foods?" Like all nutritional advice, what's helpful and relevant is what works in the context of your goals. I want to clarify that this person also shared with us that she is on a weight loss journey and has been stalled for some time. So please be mindful that our advice today is shared in the context of her goal. If you're interested in bringing more balance to your nutrition or weight loss journey, you've got to check out our balanced meal guide. We break down what balanced meals even are and how to eat in a way that satisfying so you can minimize hunger and cravings. You can find the link to download that guide in our show notes. Enjoy this episod, friends.

ANNIE
Jen, did you ever do the low-fat diet in the 90s? Was that the 90s that it was popular? Was it trendy?

JEN CAMPBELL
I did not. You have found one that I haven't done. But I do remember as a child, hearing my mom make comments about, "That's too fatty. Let's get this one. It has less fat or no fat," etc. So I know, I knew it was happening.

ANNIE
Yeah, I think a lot of women our age, 30, 40, 50, 60, have some connection to the trendy low-fat era.

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE

That seemed to be popular in the 90s. And I don't know if that was the history behind this question. But we did have a community member ask us what our thoughts are on low-fat or fat-free foods. And we want to, we want to talk about it. We want to give our two cents.

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE
Probably more than two cents, maybe more -.

JEN
Yeah. [Laughs]

ANNIE
- like $2.

JEN
We're gonna keep this short. We could make a podcast about fat-free foods up to an hour long. We could, but we are not going to.

ANNIE
Or just fat in our diets -

JEN
[Laughs]

ANNIE
- altogether.

JEN
Yeah, we could talk about that. So I want to share before we launch into this, that the context that this question was asked in, I asked her for some follow-up context, because everything needs to be put in context when it comes to nutrition advice. She shared that she has a desire to lose weight. And it has been stalled for some time. So that's the context of asking about our opinion of low-fat or fat-free foods. Okay? So if you're not trying to lose weight, the, what we talk about in here may not apply to you. But yeah, let's get into it.

ANNIE
Okay, kick it, kick us off. What do we need to know?

JEN
Well, first, I think some context about us as a company. And like our nutrition philosophy, we are food-neutral. That means we don't assign any, I guess, moral value to foods: good, bad. And we also strive to be evidence-based. So that means there, the nutrition recommendations we make

have nutritional science to back them up. But because we are food neutral, that means we see low-fat foods or fat-free foods, even if they're, you know, quote, unquote, more processed, something you find on a supermarket shelf. We still see them as a tool. Not good or bad, but a tool. Can this be used? Is this tool helpful for this person's journey? Does that make sense?

ANNIE
I'm with you. Yes.

JEN
So the question is, what do we think of low-fat or fat-free foods? Well, that really depends on the person. Are they a helpful tool for the goals that this person has?

ANNIE
Yeah, what do you think would influence that answer? How do we help someone determine if it's a helpful tool or not?

JEN
So it would depend on where this person is at, and what they are currently eating. And what the, I guess nutritional composition of their overall diet is right now. And are they eating high-fat foods? So I'm just gonna say and be blunt. We do have some members, and have had many members over the years, where a significant percentage of their calories come from fat.

ANNIE
Yeah. I would say that's a lot of humans in general. [Laughs]

JEN
Humans in general. Yes. So, we have this cultural fixation on carbs, right? Carbs are bad, carbs this, we...Low carb, carnivore, keto. However, that's not that data doesn't support that people's carbohydrate consumption is increasing over time at the same rate as, say obesity rates. Data supports that our calories are increasing. So, overall food. And I believe that our fat intake is increasing. Now that's on a population level, we have to, when we're working with clients, we have to look at a person level right? That's not everybody. And so, but it is quite common for us to see people with a high-fat consumption. And whether that's because, you know, it really comes down to the habit, right? We're a habit-based company, so what is the habit driving the fat consumption? It literally could be anything. It could be, you know, maybe they have a high fast food consumption, right? Their life, this -

ANNIE
Or just dining out.

JEN
Or dining out. Yeah.

ANNIE

I'm, I put myself in that category.

JEN
Yeah. And, or maybe they just, maybe they eat a lot of food from home, they cook a lot at home. And they just, it's their dietary preference is higher fat, right? So, and I would, I would fall in that category. And we've recorded previous podcasts on this, that my, I used to be keto, nonstop. Well, you know, on and off for almost a decade. And I've shared that one of the most challenging parts of coming off keto for me was that I had become accustomed to a high-fat diet. So having food that wasn't lathered in, you know, butter, cheese, whatever, it just tasted kind of bland to me. So that was just a whole situation for me. And I guess, you know, the same could be true for many other people, maybe some of our listeners who have, you know, dabbled or been dabbling in keto, low carb, carnivore, etc, you become accustomed to a high-fat diet.

ANNIE
Yeah. Or even as someone who does enjoy dining out, eating at home can be pretty bland comparatively.

JEN
Right. Sure.

ANNIE
I don't have all the fats and the seasonings, and not to mention the cooking skills. But that's a different story. [Laughs]

JEN
Yeah. And this dining out thing is tricky, right? Like, it's a tricky conversation to have. Because, you know, we talk about food freedom, and we talk about having, not - you don't have to cut anything that you don't want to out of your diet, you can learn to have things in moderation. The issue there is, it's a really tricky conversation to then talk about dining out because yes, we want people to have food freedom. But there's a reality there about how food is cooked at restaurants that is often just not conducive to somebody who has a weight loss goal. So here's an example. I worked in the restaurant industry for years all through college, and we had these smoothies on our menu. And they were basically, like, positioned like a healthy choice. Yes, but I knew what was happening behind the bar. I knew that our bartender made the smoothies with cream, like fruit and cream, like, hello, delicious, but also hello 1200 calories in this, right? So, this is a tricky conversation to have. And in general, people who are struggling, I'll just say in general, people struggling to lose weight who dine out frequently. If it's infrequently, don't worry about it. If it's frequently then yes, that's where some mindfulness probably has to come in around, what you're ordering or the volume of food that you eat when you order.

ANNIE
Or even frequency if that's a -

JEN

Exactly.

ANNIE
[Unintelligible]

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE
All that to say this low-fat or fat-free food might be a helpful tool for someone who has identified having a higher-fat diet.

JEN
Yes. And let's talk about why. Okay, so the reason is that number one out of the three macronutrients that we eat: protein, carbohydrates, and fat. Fat is the most energy dense. So one gram of protein, or one gram of carbohydrates has four calories in it. One gram of fat has nine calories, right? So it's double the energy density. So if you are, you know, sitting down to a big salad, and you're just pouring dressing on top, you're probably taking a low-energy density meal and moving it to high-energy density, right? And that's just a fact. That's just the reality and a fact. Number two, fat does contribute to satiety, to a certain point. So fat helps us feel satiated between meals. But there is, how do I put this, there's like a law of diminishing returns. So when you eat, you know, let's just say, for example, your meal has two or three tablespoons of fat in it somewhere. Using eight tablespoons of fat isn't going to make you, you know, so much more satiated that you don't get hungry again for, you know, many, many, many more hours. So, for people who are trying to lose weight, having a physiologically satiating diet, so that you're not struggling with hunger and cravings, is really important. And that's why we promote balanced meals, it's, all four components are important for satiety. And we talk about that a bit more in our balanced meal guide, which we can link to, and that's a free download people can read. But the tricky one of all those, all the components of a balanced meal is fat. Fat is the one that I think people just are challenged with the most.

ANNIE
Personally, and professionally, it's also really easy to over-serve yourself fat. In the variety like with dressings, oils, butters, cheeses, you know, we're using these things to add to our meals and peanut butters.

JEN
Yeah, totally. [Laughs]

ANNIE
Like, spoonful's getting pretty big. [Laughs]

JEN

Yeah. And so in, you know, in my experience, you know, people are not overeating protein and fiber, protein and fibrous foods, they're just not. They are overeating the high-fat and often the high-carb, low-fiber type foods, right? And so really, we just need to shift here, there's no, we don't need to cut out any foods, my friends, we just need to shift, we need to increase our protein and increase our fibrous food consumption and decrease a little bit of fat and decrease a little bit our refined carb consumption, right? It's not about all or nothing. It's about all or something, which is a great segue into my last point is if I'm coaching somebody who wants to reduce their fat, and is maybe looking at a grocery store shelf at all these low-fat, fat-free foods, the question isn't, should you transition to low-fat or fat-free? The question is, of the meals you eat, or of the foods you eat frequently, which ones are high-fat? And what is negotiable and non-negotiable for you? And we just do little nudges here and there. So, an example of this is I like cheese. If I had the choice between low-fat cheese and no cheese, I would just probably have no cheese. I do not find low-fat cheese satisfying. It doesn't do it for me.

ANNIE
I would agree.

JEN
A transition I have been able to make is, I no longer use cream in my coffee. I use a mixture of half and half cream and cashew milk. And so, that's because cream was negotiable for me. Cheese is non-negotiable. And every single person has to figure out what is negotiable and non-negotiable. What I find as people kind of pendulum swing from dieting, not dieting, you know, I want to lose weight. But how do I do that without restriction, that whole confusing chaos that people go through? But there's just a lot of all-or-nothing thinking inside of that chaos. So they, so but often so many people have been doing the low-fat thing that they swing into high-fat. And everything they buy is high-fat because they've been choking back zero-fat, zero-sugar yogurt for seven years, and they're just not doing it anymore. The rebel inside of them is taking over. And, and like, look, that might be a legit phase that people need to go through, and that's fine. But, and if that's working for you, that's also fine. But if you're listening to this podcast, and that's you and your weight to stuck at a certain place that you're not comfortable with. Looking at what would you be willing to change?

ANNIE
Yeah, I think I might be a little more comfortable with the no-fat or fat-free products than you. I can, I enjoy a low-fat or fat-free yogurts and milks. But there are certainly some higher fat products like, salad dressing being one of them, where I would just prefer to use less instead of the fat-free option.

JEN
Yes.

ANNIE
As many of us know, fat-free or low-fat options often do compromise taste or texture.

JEN
Yeah. And you know, when I'm working with a client through this, it's like, it's again, not about all or nothing, but it's saying swaps can work. And I know, I know the like, how activating that can feel for our dieters [laughing] out there, our restrictive dieters, because the reason it feels so activating is because they felt forced into swapping out absolutely every delicious food for some kind of you know, quote-unquote, low calorie, healthified version. But there are swaps that you can consider that might be somewhere in the middle. So I also hate, you know, there's a line of salad dressings at my grocery store that it's like five calories per serving. You might as well pour water on top of your salad. They're just gross.

BOTH
[Laugh]

ANNIE
Soup. It's now a soup. [Laughs]

JEN
Yes. But then on the flip side, salad dressings can be really high in calories. So here's the thing. I've found dressings just by looking at the nutritional information that are somewhere in the middle. And for the Americans listening, Newman's Own light oil was my go to for years. It's delicious. It's not super low calorie, but it's also not super high calorie. And they don't sell it in Canada anymore.

ANNIE
Oh, someone send Jen -

JEN
[Laughs]

ANNIE
- a box for heaven's sakes.

JEN
But I have found one that is sold in Canada, in Costco. And it's the Olive Garden Italian dressing from Costco. So it's kind of like a Newman's Own, like midway, where it's, you know, stop breaking the bank with calories. But it's still, like, it's a satisfying swap for me. So that's what I'm - if you can find satisfying swaps.

ANNIE
Yeah. I also think it's important to note that some things I'm thinking of, you know, some of those popular sweet treats that are fat-free, in an effort to maintain this, like delicious, sweet taste, they often increase sugar.

JEN

Yeah.

ANNIE
As a way to mitigate the reduction in fat. And so from that standpoint, just taking a peek as you, as you said, Jen, at the nutritional label, comparing, you know, products real quickly, you might, you might not even get much of a calorie difference.

JEN
Yeah.

ANNIE
I'm thinking like, even my coffee creamer. It's not uncommon to see fat-free and sugar free, but the calorie is, the calorie density is the same.

JEN
And that might come down to a person's goals in the context of their diet. Would they rather have a little less sugar? Would they rather have a little less fat, right? There might be people with, I don't know, cholesterol issues that need to be reducing their fat. And there may be people with insulin resistance issues that need to take a look at their, you know, overall carbohydrate consumption. So it all comes down to context of the person. So.

ANNIE
Yeah, yeah. And if you don't want to swap can you just use less?

JEN
Can you just use less? Yeah, I remember using, God these were all the rage back in the day, chocolate protein brownies in a mug. You like made a brownie in a mug, you microwave, it -

ANNIE
Yeah, I still do that.

JEN
Do you?

ANNIE
[Laughs] Yeah, like some protein powder and eggs and water.

JEN
Yes. So listen, sounds like you like them because you're still eating them. I never liked them, and I would just like, I feel like I was like, gaslighting myself or something. I'd be like, "This is so good. It's the same." [Laughs] And it wasn't. And the reality is my cravings over the years just intensified for brownies because of how much I restricted them. Now that I don't restrict, I don't feel, I don't have these big food preoccupations where I'm craving brownies all the time. So now

I can just, I can, if I want a brownie, I'll just have a regular brownie, and I'll enjoy it and move on with my life.

ANNIE
I'm not trying to yuck on anyone's yum. But I do feel that way about Halo Top ice cream.

JEN
Oh!

ANNIE
I could have a few spoonfuls of a really rich, decadent ice cream and feel totally satisfied. And like, that was, that was a great choice. Or I could eat a pint of Halo Top and be like, "I still want the ice cream that I don't get." [Laiughs]

JEN
Yeah, because it's not psychologically satisfying.

ANNIE
It doesn't have that richness that I'm really looking for. But again, you know, my boyfriend loves Halo Top and is completely satisfied. So to each their own.

JEN
Is he? Yeah, I don't get it. But. [Laughs]

ANNIE
He's cut from a different cloth, I think.

JEN
Yeah. So, long story short, that is our opinion on low-fat or fat-free foods. They are, they, we are neutral. They are a tool. What would you be using them for? Do they work in the context of what your goals are? And if you do, please don't be all or nothing with it. You can just go through the foods you frequently eat, and nudge them towards where you want to be to support your goals. And I think the bottom line, the biggest thing people need to know is, it's not going to be sustainable if it's not, if it's not, if it's not a satisfying swap.

ANNIE
Great question. I appreciate whoever asked that. Keep them coming. Okay. I think we're good, Jen. Yeah?

JEN
Yes.

ANNIE
We kept it short-ish.

JEN
We, I hope so. Yes. [Laughs]

ANNIE
We, I think we could have spent more time on it. But we'll pause there for today. Thanks for listening, everyone. We'll talk to you soon.

JEN
Bye.

ANNIE (OUTRO)
Hey, everyone. If your mind has been blown while listening to this podcast, just wait until you work with us. Let us help you level up your health and wellness habits and your life inside Balance365 coaching. Head on over to balance365.co to join coaching.