

**Jolley: Five minutes with CJ Hunt, the perfect human diet and a great steak**  
**Chuck Jolley Updated: February 25, 2011**

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We've all heard about the pop-diet gurus who push a vegetarian or near vegetarian diet on the public, usually by quoting each other as 'trusted' sources. That pop-science flick "Food, Inc." traveled down that same well-worn path to perdition. "Eat meat and you'll die a horrible, disease-ridden death and suffer eternal damnation," they seem to say.

When I first heard about CJ Hunt and his film, "In Search of the Perfect Human Diet™," my first reaction was, "Oh, no, here we go again - another thrashing from yet another pop scientist/diet guru guy. I wonder of his bff is Eric Schlosser or maybe Michael Pollan?"

But Mr. Hunt actually likes beef and thinks animal proteins are absolutely essential in the perfect human diet. Talk about swimming upstream? He's heading up the Snake River during the spring snow melt on this one. All I can say as a devout carnivore is, "Paddle hard, you're headed in the right direction!"

Hunt started from a different place than the likes of Schlosser and Pollan, though. Maybe their less than science-based background is why they're starting to lose their standing with some of their long-time fan base, even getting some heat from disgruntled vegetarians.

Hunt is a broadcast journalist, a reporter by trade; trained to be doubtful, ask hard questions and double check sources. Before he answered my questions, he wanted to talk about why he started this project in the first place.

He said, "Thank you for this opportunity to answer questions about my upcoming documentary special, "In Search of the Perfect Human Diet," and to say how exciting it is that so many diverse groups and individuals are rallying to fund the film's completion and release. This is happening because of the unique and captivating discoveries about human nutrition, and its dramatic effect on our health and well-being today, which have been made during the 3-1/2 year search."

"These new scientific revelations have made the search for the "perfect human diet" an incredibly fascinating treasure hunt, one that will be a real eye-opener for audiences everywhere."

"Just so there is no misunderstanding, as there are so many passionate points of view in the nutrition arena, I want to preface answering your questions with this clarification: this is a search I took on independently, at my own expense, to see if it was possible to find new information that could help solve the growing, and tragic, epidemic of obesity and chronic disease."

"All principle filming was completed long before I widened my completion funding outreach. Now, I'm seeking completion support from all parties interested in the films educational mission of adding to the public conversation about how we can be most healthy, including the animal protein industry. It's particularly important to me to be fully transparent and say without any reservations that no contributor, individual or corporate, has had, or will have, any influence on the film's content in any way. Contributors all agree to this, and nicely enough, because they recognize the film's positive potential for all viewers."

“To illustrate my point, I have received funding from a very diverse group. These include recent contributions from Boston Scientific (my pacemaker company), JBS USA, AgriBeef Co. and over 150 individuals around the globe, concerned about knowing as much as we can about human health. For a full list of contributors, please see the Web site which is updated every week or two.”

“Also, to assist in raising the full funding needed for post-production and distribution, Beth Johnson, M.S., R.D., a food and nutrition policy veteran with Food Directions LLC, has been enlisted to help me complete the fund-raising. According to Ms. Johnson, ‘It is critical that the public make informed decisions about their diet to get and stay as healthy as possible. Without access to a variety of scientific disciplines, the consumer is at a disadvantage.’”

“So, why me? Why did I take on this quest? Briefly, my personal and professional interest for seeking out the realities about human nutrition started for me 33 years ago at the age of 24, when I went jogging at a local high school track. A lap and a half later, I dropped dead of a cardiac arrest. Luckily, an anesthesiologist showed up to go jogging and rescued me. In my case, it turned out to be a heart birth defect issue, not my lifestyle. But as a result of that scary incident, I became driven to learn anything I could to remain as healthy as possible.”

Here are his answers to my questions:

Q. “In Search of the Perfect Human Diet” is a pretty bold statement. Over the years, I've seen hundreds of diet books, news stories, late night infomercials...all claiming to tell an overweight public what they should eat to miraculously shed all those extra pounds. Even though a few even became short-term fads, most turned out to be just this side of snake oil. What sets your effort apart from them?

A. At this moment in history, we are losing the war with obesity, and losing badly. Between 300- 400,000 American's die every year from complications related to diet and obesity. And sadly, this crisis is not ours alone. The World Health Organization (WHO) projects that by 2015, 700 million adults will be obese worldwide.

You and your readers probably know that overweight and obesity are largely preventable. Research studies show clearly that the right approach to diet will lead to a reduction of, or prevent, the incidence of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and certain forms of cancer; all connected to, or worsened by, overweight and obesity. But with conflicting messages from U.S. and international governments, interests vested in the status quo, and new diet guru's surfacing everyday; we tend to go numb in the confusion of the media frenzy. We really don't know what to do or who to believe. It's imperative that we find out how stop this crisis once and for all - but as you imply in the question, how to do that?

As a broadcast journalist, my approach was designed to be an investigative documentary looking for solutions, not setting out with an agenda to prove one way of thinking over another, or make an attack film trying to beat up perceived 'bad guys.' “In Search of the Perfect Human Diet” is an unprecedented global scientific exploration for the solution to the epidemic of overweight, obesity and its associated chronic diseases that are now the #1 killer in America.

Q. I've watched your trailer and I guess it did what it was designed to do - arouse my curiosity about the film. Without giving away the store, did you find the perfect diet and would you talk about what belongs on my dinner plate?

A. Honestly, yes – I did find that the newest scientific facts reveal the “perfect human diet.” And at this point, through no fault of our own, most of us are way off track. The breakthrough science uncovered during this journey to solve the obesity epidemic is remarkable. In fact, evolving science in general is changing lots of long held perspectives.

For example, I filmed Dr. Andrew Weil recently at the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicines Convention in Atlanta to stay on top of the current trends in nutritional thinking where he said in a talk and at the public forum (essentially) that saturated fat wasn't as bad as he used to think it was. As Dr. Weil is also a Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) advisory board member, this in itself is mind opening as a departure from the PCRM's beliefs. During that same public discussion, co-panelist and former FDA commissioner David Kessler was surprised by Dr. Weil's statement, unaware of the newest research. It's no wonder the public is confused.

What belongs on your dinner plate? Certainly, I don't want to spoil the movie for anyone but what I can tell you is this, the solution to our epidemic of overweight and obesity, and the dietary understanding needed to achieve optimal health, lies not in focusing on trying to slightly rework the USDA Food Pyramid every five years but in a vast area of overlooked understanding in nutrition - the nutritional evolution of the human species. It's also shocking to see the negative consequences that happened to us when we went off track from the lifestyle that made us big, strong, healthy and smart, free of modern diseases.

Practically speaking, one of the film's practicing physicians who uses these discoveries with his patients to great result says it best - eat 'human foods' and eliminate 'non-human foods.'

Q. Give me the hard facts about the diet - what have you found out about human nutrition that backs the claims made in your film?

A. I don't personally make any claims; I'm a reporter on a search asking new questions of many little known, or unknown, first-person scientists and researchers. The scientific experts, discoveries and evidence are what show us the answer to the question “is there a perfect human diet?”

Q. I've watched "Food, Inc." a few times and have been horrified at the "Perfect Propaganda" of the film. It's a slickly-done documentary that took some astonishing liberties with the facts. When your documentary is released, will it counter pseudo-science with real science and how do you think the folks in animal agriculture will react?

A. Well, again, this has been a search for new scientific information, not a commercial for a preset point of view. In fact, when I started the search I didn't know anything about many of the experts I eventually met.

It happened this way. The first interview I conducted was with Professor Loren Cordain of Colorado State University, a leading U.S. expert in evolutionary human nutrition. At the conclusion of my time with him, he added, “You know who you should go talk to is Mike Richards at the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig, Germany...” And this kind of mention at the end of each interview is what ended up directing the course of filming.

These unexpected moments and mentions took me from excavations containing the remains of Neanderthals and early modern humans in Jonzac, France, to the biomolecular anthropology analyses labs at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, and more. Every destination provided more groundbreaking evidence of a "perfect" human diet that shouldn't be ignored.

I believe folks in animal agriculture will be truly amazed at the importance of animal proteins in the human diet as they've been exposed to the same confusing data and personal opinions voiced as 'facts' as everyone else – I know I was. In fact, it'll become clear from the anthropological sciences that we, the public, wouldn't even have the brain power to fuss about the different nutritional belief systems if we hadn't evolved our brain size and intellectual capacities by eating animal proteins and fats. They were critical to our development, and, interestingly enough, this new research says optimal human health is still dependent upon them,

Q. Lately, the foodie books have made headlines by taking shots at meat. One after another has preached a no meat or a greatly reduced meat diet. The Fed's Food Pyramid has even moved meat protein down the ladder a few steps. Where would a Perfect Human Diet place a good steak?

A. The most advanced biomolecular anthropology analyses that we're bringing to a mass audience for the first time say that a perfect human diet, and our ability to be our healthiest, requires a good steak as a central part of our regular diet. Biomolecular anthropologists have tested the remains of thousands of individuals from all over the planet with the same conclusion - there are no substitutes for animal proteins in a healthy human diet - current common nutritional thinking doesn't understand this. We haven't had all this information available to consider previously, it's too new, and not yet out to the public for consideration.

Q. Earlier this month you attended the National Meat Association Convention and talked with some industry folks. I knew most of the people that surrounded you afterwards and they're a very hard-nosed, skeptical bunch. Tell me about the conversations you had with them.

A. Honestly, producers, ranchers, distributors, everyone I spoke with was very interested in the film, these new discoveries, and how to get involved and become a contributor to enable the film's completion and release. If they had questions, they were genuinely curious to know more –very open and enthusiastic that there is independent science that can be a game changer for the industry.

I said to them that this film has the potential to change the anti-meat and animal proteins debate by providing new facts that have not been presented to the public. Too often, consumers hear the same information from the same group of advocates. With the film's completion and release, they will have the opportunity to see the nutritional science that's been missing or hidden from view, and learn, like I did, that the constant negative messages about eating meat are not only wrong, but also severely damaging our health.

Otherwise, there were two main questions; "When would we be able to view the film?" About four months after all completion funds are raised. I'd like to see the film out by mid-July, meaning we'd need to have fundraising completed in March.

And, “How do I plan to distribute it”? To reach a largest audience possible, my plan is to have invitational theatrical premieres for print, news and broadcast media in five major US cities (LA, DC, NY, Dallas/Houston, Chicago). Thereafter, we would immediately distribute the documentary through DVD, Video-on-Demand, and iTunes channels. Once the film is completed, CNN and other cable networks will then have the opportunity to look at it for potential airplay.

I’d like to take this opportunity to thank the NMA, who was kind enough to send out a message of support to their executive board members, encouraging all producers to seriously take a look at contributing to help get this information out to the public.

For more information visit the website at [www.perfecthumandiet.com](http://www.perfecthumandiet.com) or contact Beth Johnson at [bethjohnson@fooddirectionsdc.com](mailto:bethjohnson@fooddirectionsdc.com).

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