



How to include nutritious foods into your diet for health  
Laura Lane's interview with Tina Jo Stephens  
Episode #24, Hope, Strength and Courage Podcast

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Thank you for tuning into the Hope Strength Courage Podcast. Love and support for parents whose kids are fighting for their lives! A weekly podcast created to support parents and caregivers of children diagnosed with cancer, where you will find resources collected to help you face each day with Hope, Strength and Courage. From interviews with the top experts in their fields: doctors, psychologists, chaplains and inspiring frontline workers in paediatric oncology as they share their best advice, as well as day to day advice collected from other cancer moms and leaders in personal growth and development. From individuals who understand how hard it can be, I hope you will feel better prepared to cope with the day to day challenges of caring for your child.

Hi, I am Laura Lane, and I am your host. My own daughter Celeste was diagnosed with cancer at the age of 12. In 2015 I wrote about our experiences in the book "Two Mothers One Prayer: Facing your child's cancer with Hope Strength and Courage". Since that time, I have dedicated thousands of hours to share with other parents and caregivers the resources, tools, tips, skills and strategies I learned that helped our family to stay happier, healthier and more hopeful. My goal is to share with you my interviews with experts to support you as you care for a child with cancer.

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This week before I introduce today's interview, I'd like to tell you about the projects I've been working on to better support you as a cancer parent and the sponsor partners who are helping to make it happen.

I am most excited to tell you about our partnership with Royal Bank of Canada and Ronald McDonald House Charities South Central Ontario where we are donating of 100 copies and launching our Stronger Daily Planner for the most amazing moms on the planet. Everything you need to stay sane while caring for a child with cancer. A daily, weekly, monthly tracker for all things childhood cancer related. A planner to keep track of diagnosis, treatment plan, symptoms, medications, reactions, food intake, blood count tracker plus everything else you need to keep track of for your family at home. If you would like to learn more, or inquire about how to order your copy or how to sponsor copies for families at your local hospital, please visit our website [STRONGERPLANNER.COM](http://STRONGERPLANNER.COM). This project has been made possible with the funding help of Royal Bank of Canada, Ronald McDonald House Charities South Central



Ontario to help us distribute the planners, the design expertise of Mockingbird Design and Impressive Printing in Hamilton Ontario.

Our other exciting news is our 30 min free webinar series “Coping Skills for Cancer Moms” hosted every Friday at 12pm North American Eastern time. I hope you will join me each week as I cover one of seven pillars to living with grace and ease. My goal is to share the valuable skills I learned when our daughter Celeste was diagnosed, give you a short activity to help you apply the skill then open things up for questions, all in less than 30 minutes. If you are struggling right now, this might be just what you need to help you feel loved and supported and give you the strength you need to carry on one more day, one more week, one more month. To learn more please visit my website [LauraLane.ca](http://LauraLane.ca).

Now for today’s episode which features my interview with Whole Food Nutritionist Tina Jo Stephens as we discuss how we can use diet to heal our lives.

Last week was part three of my interview with NLP Practitioners Ed Olvera and Jacquie Nagy and we spoke with them about using cognitive behaviour therapy to help us become more hopeful.

This week Tina Jo talks with us about how the food we eat makes a difference in how we feel. And the importance of finding foods that heal and sustain our bodies. Both for our children and ourselves. She talks about how to marry nutrition and how to make really good food taste good, in her words to make it taste scrumptious.

I hope you will enjoy this interview as much as I did.

**Laura:** I am pleased to formally introduce you to Tina Jo Stephens

Tina is a highly respected gourmet Raw Vegan Chef, author, speaker, coach and a proud member of the Million Mom Movement. She holds a certification in plant-based nutrition from Cornell University and is a graduate of the renowned Living Light Culinary Institute. Chef Tina Jo is known internationally for her humour, down to earth approach to a whole earth-based food lifestyle. She has made it her life's mission to bring super scrumptious fresh, fun and affordable whole plant-based foods and super foods to the mainstream. One of Tina Jo’s proudest achievements has been working with cancer patients and caregivers in creating a culinary cancer fighting toolkit which helps them to thrive during and after treatment, right in their own kitchen.

**Tina Jo:** Thank you so much. I’m really honoured to be here, Laura. Thank you for letting me be a part of this amazing summit that you're holding.

**Laura:** Well, thank you. So, the first thing I'd like to know is, tell us what led you into the whole field of nutrition. What set you on that path?

**Tina Jo:** What set me on that path? Well, to be honest with you, it was my brother. My brother was diagnosed with cancer when he was in his 20s, I was in my 30s, and – you know,



it's interesting because as I talk to more people who are fighting for a cure, or trying to help others who have this disease and finding more and more there's that common denominator of we've all been touched by this disease somehow so, for me, it was my brother.

I knew absolutely nothing at that time about nutrition or food or anything, you know. We were doing rehab. That's what we were doing, and we took a traditional route. And I'm going to try not to get emotional, I'm sorry. I knew you were going to ask this question and it still comes up for me. It just wasn't working. And so, I decided that I needed to take matters into my own hands, and I became an advocate. I became his best advocate and through research I started to find that food could make a difference. And so, for me, you know, torn between two emotions: one, I was thrilled to find that information, and the other part of me was really angry because I thought "how come I didn't know this?" "How come my doctors didn't talk to me about food, and how can actually heal the body"? And it wound up being too late for my brother, but I dove in after he passed, and I really made it part of who I am. And my mission was to marry nutrition and how to make really good food taste good, make it taste scrumptious. Now I'm an Italian girl so I grew up in the kitchen so that's nothing new to me but trying to figure out how to make something green, you know, coming from an Italian family, we didn't have that. Everything was red and covered in cheese and it was processed. And how to make, you know, vegetables really taste good. That became my mission and that's how I started.

**Laura:** Oh, that's cool. Yeah, I love the kitchen myself. I love cooking so I can understand. So, how did you get first involved with working with cancer patients? So, you obviously you were supporting your brother, but how did you get involved with helping others? What was the next step?

**Tina Jo:** Well, it's really interesting because I'm an author of ten books. I have ten cookbooks informational books out there. But it was this book – my juice feasting book that actually caught the eye of a doctor, and it was a doctor here in Mexico. So unbeknownst to both of us at the time – this is so, you know, serendipity, it's beautiful how the universe actually works in your favour. When he contacted me, I didn't know he was in Mexico, and he certainly didn't know I was living here, and we wound up through conversation finding out that we were forty-five minutes apart.

**Laura:** Oh wow

**Tina Jo:** I know, right? How beautiful is the Universe? So, I brought my book in and the program that I had created about juice feasting to his clinic to help his patients. I'm a firm believer and was a huge advocate of juice feasting to help cleanse the body and to help rebuild the body, particularly during a disease such as if one has cancer. But we were very successful in clinic, but part of the battle was when people would go home, they wouldn't be able to stay in the program. But, you know, when you think about it, juicing isn't really that simple because the program consisted of folks juicing about a gallon or more of juice a day. So, people had to go out and buy thirty pounds of produce, because that's what it would take



to get one gallon of juice. So, they'd have to cut it. They'd have to juice it. They'd have to bottle it. Then they'd have to clean all that up and then they'd have to drink it. And they'd have to do it again, and again, and again, day after day after day.

That's really how I started working with cancer patients. There's now a different program that we work with that is far more simpler, but it was just interesting. It's interesting how the universe just leads you into a different direction sometimes.

**Laura:** But tell us about your culinary cancer fighting tool kit now then.

**Tina Jo:** So, what it's involved in, you know, it's really very simple now. It's actually three things. It's protein, fruits and vegetables. Very simple. Protein consists of legumes. It's a pre-digested tablet that one actually take. It bypasses the liver; it bypasses the kidney. It doesn't create any fecal matter. And so, what it does is, it actually goes to the bloodstream in twenty-three minutes. So, the body has all this energy, and it actually helps to build muscle because what happens sometimes is when we're sick, we don't feel good, we don't eat. The body goes into starvation mode, and it will actually go to our muscle for energy. So, this helps kind of trick the brain a little bit, and the brain ... the body will use our stored fat for energy, and it will actually help us to build muscle. So, we maintain our muscle mass and we have that energy which is so needed to fight any discomfort or disease in our body.

So, the veggies. Now I am with a company that really believes in the most purest of products. So, these are all organic; they're non-GMO; they're gluten-free. There's no colors, no dyes, there's, I mean this is all just food, real food and real super foods. So, these are powders. They're dehydrated; they're raw; they're living. So, it's basically you just take a scoop of it, and you throw it in some water, or your favourite nut milk. And you shake it. Super simple. So, one of the formulas actually has 36 veggies in it, thirty-six!

**Laura:** Wow!

**Tina Jo:** So, you talk about the positive compound effect that that can have on someone's health, and particularly for parents too, you know, because we want to do the best for our family. We want to do the best for our kids. And you know, sitting in the kitchen and trying to prepare thirty-six vegetables or to juice thirty-six vegetables or to get them to consume, that can be really challenging. So, this makes it really super simple, very fast, and very affordable.

And then the fruit. The fruits are our antioxidants and that comes in a - just a cherry drink, it's absolutely delightful. Children love it, adults love it. And cherries actually have the highest melatonin rates of any fruit on the planet. So, the natural melatonin actually helps us to get our sleep, which is, again, really important when healing the body. So, it's those three things, those three things that – they're three core ingredients that really help us to thrive and to recover from any disease.

**Laura:** I live in Ontario, in Canada and we're in the fruit basket of Canada. We have cherry trees, peach trees, orchards, vineyards. And because there are so many farmers around who



have orchards with cherries, they talk about, they're always promoting cherry juice and the effect that it can have. I know people who take it for arthritis so it must reduce swelling.

**Tina Jo:** It absolutely does. It absolutely does. It's fabulous for inflammation so it helps reduce swelling as you're saying; it's fabulous for athletes. And just, you know, in general. Sometimes we take a lot of medications with this particular disease so it helps to reduce the inflammation that we can have in the body. Really, really important. So, you know, having these in your kitchen, really can make life very simple and very easy and again, we can take care of our families and take care of ourselves as well.

**Laura:** So, what is the advice that you would give to parents whose children have cancer? What are the things you would really recommend to them? What would you share with them?

**Tina Jo:** Well, let's see. There's a laundry list. I mean, there truly is. I think like ... first and foremost, cancer's curable. So really try to remain calm. You know, really do remember that.

I think, for me personally, it was my brother that went through cancer. But I was his guardian so that really was my baby. He was my Robin; I was his Batman. And so, I held a lot of guilt. I held a lot of guilt because at the time I didn't know the benefits of food. You know. I was a drive-thru mommy for him. If it wasn't McDonalds, it was whatever I could actually get him to consume in the time. So, I held a lot of guilt and I think the most important thing is just to release that; and to be your best advocate; be your child's advocate; follow your intuition.

No one knows your child like you know your child. Don't ever be afraid to ask questions. I think sometimes we get into a situation where we put folks on pedestals and sometimes, they're not all that. I think it's okay to ask questions. You know, that's really important.

When it comes to food, and taking back your health and really taking control, I think it has to be, you know, one for all and all for one. This has to be a whole family thing. You know, there's no time for pity parties. And it really is about getting the junk out of house. No more processed food and really become aware of what organic means, what GMO means. Learn how to read the skewers on your fruits. Learn how to read labels and really be proactive. And it can even be simple things. You know, here in my kitchen, I have a little one, I have a four-year-old, and so I keep fruits out so that little hands can easily grab them. And that's the norm. No junk in my house. And it's really important to be that advocate. And I think for goodness sakes, you know, I think the most important thing also would be if you -because you're making a new lifestyle, you know. This is not a diet that you're about to undertake. This is a whole new family lifestyle. Don't gripe about, you know, not being able to have the drive thru or whatever it may be in front of your kids because they hear all of that.

That's my experience and so that would be some of the things that I will share.

**Laura:** So, it's important to model that for our children.

**Tina Jo:** Absolutely.



**Laura:** And for me, I found that when I had to change my diet, I felt so much better. I started to physically look better but I had more energy, and I just enjoyed foods much more, it wasn't just ... it's so hard though when you're in the hospital and trying to make do but when you come back home, freedom trying to make the best choices possible.

**Tina Jo:** And stay away from the hospital food. It really does start to become like; you need to think outside the box. You can't be in that box anymore. You do spend a lot of time in hospital situations and if it's the typical hospital food, you know, you've got to stop and you've got to remember I need to pack up some food. I mean, just really start thinking that this is just a different life track now. Really preparing yourself, preparing for success, preparing for your babies to come home. I think that's really important. And being a role model, just as you're saying.

And our taste buds will change once we stop eating the junk, and we start putting whole food nutrition in our bodies, really cool things happen. Our taste buds change! So, when you go out a restaurant or you go to a family's house, and you have something and you taste how much salt is actually in food, or how much sugar is actually in food, for the very first time, you can actually be like "wow, this is – I can see how this isn't good for our bodies". I mean, we all know at this point our food supply is loaded with sugar and salt and fats and artificial colorings, I mean it's just junk. It's really not even food at this point and time. And our soil is really depleted. There's very, very few minerals in our soils anymore and our crops are continuously sprayed with pesticides. So, it's no wonder that, you know, cancer and diabetes and heart disease and Alzheimer's and autism are – and obesity. They're all on the rise, it's exploding. So back into the kitchen as we need to take back our food supply.

**Laura:** Yeah. There's such a difference to ... we try and grow a garden. This year we've got a lot of tomatoes, cucumbers, squashes. And tomato fresh from the garden tastes so much different than a store bought, mass produced ...

**Tina Jo:** It's amazing, isn't it? It's juicy and plump and most of the time, you know, particularly if you're not buying organic, the tomatoes aren't even ripe. They taste rubbery. I mean, there's a huge difference as you're saying, if you have the space to have a garden by all means have a garden. And gardens can even be as simple as just having some pots on your deck or on your windowsill. Sometimes it really comes down, again, you know, super foods and having products. That's what's so cool about, you know, 2016. We have science now, so we can take science and we can master products and food of a hundred years ago and that's pretty much what the company that I've done represents and it's really bringing it to the mainstream now which awesome.

**Laura:** Yeah, that's awesome. I was thinking of parents who're in the thick of it when they're at the hospital and they're looking for things to ask them and they can be asked to bring me that that's something that they can pass around especially this time of year right now, when people are starting harvesting that we need to be thinking about can we – we've got extra.



Can we donate it to the Ronald McDonald Houses and where families are staying, give them access to some fresh produce?

**Tina Jo:** I think that's a brilliant idea actually. You know, we think about now is really the time to stock up, as you're saying. So, we can do canning, we can do fermentation and fermented foods are so healing for the body, for the gut. They are absolutely amazing. What you can do with ferments for shelf life, same thing for canned foods. Not canned foods ...

**Laura:** Dehydrated?

**Tina Jo:** I've just lost my train of thought. Not canned foods but when you're canning. And when you're canning foods. I don't want anyone to think I'm talking about canned foods but ...

**Laura:** Not from the grocery store but homemade.

**Tina Jo:** When my mom was alive that was what she used to do. It's a beautiful thing. I remember walking into the pantry and seeing how gorgeous everything was. The peaches, you know, and beets and the celery and all the pickles. It was amazing. So absolutely. I think you, you know, you really hit on something. Also too, not be afraid to ask for help for parents. When someone we love is affected cancer, it can be very challenging for family members to figure out exactly what to say. Sometimes, you know, some of the things that they say, quite frankly are silly. It's just because they just don't know any better. They just don't know how to help. And so, to learn to ask for help by saying could you bring some, you know, some fruit or some vegetables over. Or a great salad. Could you bring me great salad? Or could you make some homemade chicken soup, you know, or that kind of thing would be really beneficial.

**Laura:** Throughout the summit, all of the interviews that I've been doing we've been talking a lot about reaching out, connecting, asking for help. That's been a big key thing. And it's having ideas of what to ask for because at first people throw that question at you and I'm like "I don't know". So, if we can write these things down, we get overwhelmed and say I don't even know, so you can start to write down when you have those moments, when things are clear and you can make that list of what are all of the things that would be really lovely, that I could really use right now. And those little things that people can do. People want to help. That was the one thing that I learned when I went through this with my daughter is that people wanted to help. You just have to give them an opportunity and they will step and do miracles and wonderful things.

**Tina Jo:** I am a firm believer in that as well as the striving, that's beautiful. It's really true. I think sitting down, as you're saying, jotting out when you have some quiet time to ask for things. And I think it's also about, again, when you do come home things that you can do to kind of make getting into the kitchen fun. And to make it easy, because it needs to be easy, right? I mean, we want great food, we want nutritional food, but we don't want to be spending all of our time in the kitchen, there's far better things to do. And so, making a game



with your kids, you know, if you're not used to eating a lot of vegetables or eating a lot of fruits, make a game out of, you know, once a week let's add a new vegetable that we've never tried. Or add a new fruit that we've never tried. Or a little game that we just started playing here in the house, was we have, once a week, there's Top Chef. So, we all take turns at cooking. And my son is actually, he's four, but he's learning how to cook. He's learning the importance of that and so talking about recipes, talking about food, and particularly when we're not feeling good. Sometimes the last thing, depending on what type of processes these people are going through. Chemotherapy, a lot of times there's chemo-mouth. And so, there's no taste. There's really no taste. So, working, again, outside of the box, and thinking about the other visuals we have. We can see and we can smell. And so, sautéing some onions, and aromatics, there's onions, garlic, celery, and kind of getting the taste buds going, we start to salivate and so then we get hungry. We also use our eyes. Serving something in a pretty dish. Or, you know, if your child is well enough, take them shopping and ask, you know, let's go buy a new plate for you, let's go buy a new cup, something that they can get excited about when you're serving them a smoothie or juice or salad. Difficult as it can be, you really do need to take some time to think outside of that box and this Summit is amazing because it really is going to plant a seed for so many parents. And even if it's not a parent, maybe it's friend who happens to watch this who knows somebody who has a child that's ill and so... Laura, honestly, what you're doing is really a beautiful thing and I'm honoured to be a part of that, I really am.

**Laura:** Thank you so much. So, my last question for you is what website can we direct our audience to so they can learn more about you and they can learn more about your work? Where they can access your cookbooks and things like that? Where can we send them?

**Tina Jo:** Beautiful, thank you. So, you can send them to [www.cheftinajo.com](http://www.cheftinajo.com). Actually, I'm in the process of creating a brand-new website, which is very exciting. So, what you're going to get is a landing page and on that landing page you can just go ahead and fill out your name and your email address and tell me how you came to that page because I certainly want to make sure that I can talk more about you. But I'm going to make sure that everyone who has seen this interview, get some free samples of some of these superfoods that I was talking about. And also, I think I sent this to you too, Laura, I have a free cookbook for everyone. It's the chocolate cookbook. Little ones love it, but so do adults. And this actually has some superfoods in it and it will be one of the superfoods that I send you so you can try one of the recipes which will be a lot of fun. And a fifty-dollar (\$50.00) gift card if someone is interested in trying some of the products that will offset the cost. It's my gift to really try to help get these into the homes of the people that really need it the most.

**Laura:** Thank you. That is so very nice of you. Thank you, Tina, that's wonderful.

**Tina Jo:** You're welcome, you're welcome. Again, Laura, thank you, it's been an honour to be here.





What I loved about this interview is how Tina explains that this is a family adventure. And she reminded me about things I had forgotten to do myself for our family.

I appreciate all the great pieces of advice she shares throughout the interview from her experiences caring for her younger brother. Everything from letting go of guilt to remembering to ask for help. Such great reminders that stand the test of time. They were helpful when my daughter was in treatment and continue to be helpful years later.

This interview was recorded a few years back now and Tina's website has changed so to learn more about Tina, please visit her new website at [www.rawfoodrecepies.com](http://www.rawfoodrecepies.com)

Please join me next week for my interview with Mind Movies Founder Natalie Ledwell as we discuss how to focus on the positive through affirmations and vision boards

Before we end our show today, we have one last segment. Over the last few years, I have asked other cancer moms what advice they wish they had known when their child was first diagnosed. I have compiled that information and will be sharing their advice each week. You can download the top 101 pieces of advice that I put together as a mini E-book at [www.twomothersoneprayer.com](http://www.twomothersoneprayer.com)

Today's advice comes from Kim,

Let people help. Lay down your pride, even if you think you don't need it, let them. People want to make you a meal, they want to give you money. They don't know how to help and this is how they want to do. Let them. It took us a while to figure this out.

Thanks, Kim, for sharing that.

If you have advice you have learned along the way that you wish someone had told you weeks, months or years earlier, I invite you to fill out the contact form on our website [www.twomothersoneprayer.com](http://www.twomothersoneprayer.com) and I will be sharing your advice with our listeners on future shows.

***[Music begins lightly in the background]***

*Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule today to listen to the Hope, Strength & Courage podcast. I look forward to sharing more experts and advice with you again next Wednesday. Please remember to take a minute to subscribe to the show. Thanks also need to go out to our Hope, Strength & Courage production team which consists of my wonderful assistant Tracey Ogilvie-McDonald, Andrew Braun at Braun Audio and Audio Geek, music by Fiz Anthony, and graphic design by Amy Hosmer. To learn more about myself, Laura Lane, and to order my book, please visit [www.lauralane.ca](http://www.lauralane.ca).*

***[Music fades to end]***