



DIAGNOSIS: DELICIOUS!

RECOVERING FROM SERIOUS ILLNESS GAVE DR RUPY AUJLA A NEW UNDERSTANDING ON HEALTH – STARTING WITH THE FOOD WE EAT. HE TELLS MATT MYERS ABOUT HIS DIETARY PRACTISE AND HIS BOOK *THE DOCTOR'S KITCHEN*.

DNA: You're a doctor who educates on eating healthy; how that came about is quite dramatic, isn't it?

Rupy Aujla: When I first became a doctor, I got ill myself. Because of the stress, late nights and such, I started suffering with something called Atrial Fibrillation, which is basically where your heart beats irregularly and very fast. So I had tests done with an amazing medial team including cardiologists, and ended up having a good look at my lifestyle. I examined what I was eating, and doing generally on a daily basis, and overcame my problem through food and medicine. But it also included working on lifestyle factors such as sleep, exercise, meditation and other things which all led to reversing my medical condition.

So, *The Doctor's Kitchen* grew from there?

I started researching during my medical training, and began to preach what I was practicing as a GP to my patients. I developed a habit of writing down recipes that inspired and motivated people to eat their way to health. Then the idea of *The Doctor's Kitchen* popped into my head, not only to create recipes, but talk about the medical research behind the ingredients. It was a nice portal for my patients.

Did that feel somewhat risky?

A doctor talking about food and medicine is quite unusual, so I was fearful of a possible backlash when I began on YouTube and other social media platforms, but the response has been amazing. I started *The Doctor's Kitchen* when I was in Australia.

You say that the "future of medicine is functional". What do you mean by that?

It's about lifestyle medicine, and looks at the basics of why someone is ill and the cause of the symptoms. It's looking at how a person eats, sleeps and their stress release strategy, and figuring out what's wrong in their geology. Geology is pretty amazing when it comes to how our cells regenerate and function, and how we deal with daily life stresses. For our 'machines' to go wrong, something is going wrong much further down the line. It's really a back to basics approach.

Many gay men adhere to what they believe are healthy practices in terms of exercise and diet – are we setting a good example?

It depends on the context. If a man is looking after his health and eating right and feeling good about himself, then that's great. But it depends what the aim is. If the aim is to always look good, and I'm not saying that all gay men are like this,

but if it's done just to look aesthetically pleasing for a potential partner, then those reasons could lead to unhealthy habits and an over-obsession with healthy eating. What I try to encourage with healthy habits is to improve the mind, aesthetics and function of the body.

So, the message is don't become obsessed with health and fitness for the sake of appearances alone?

In the social media generation, we are bombarded with images of people who are aesthetically wonderful and seem to have the perfect lifestyle. They do beach runs, go to the gym and fit in amazingly healthy meals but, for many, that's not a reality. For the average gay man to attain that, it could mean quite a lot of stress, so it's important to maintain balance.

The Doctor's Kitchen book has just been released. What's makes it different from others in this genre?

It's a real foodie book and not a healthy restrictive eating book. I describe it as a culinary jam-packed book of medicine! The first part deals with why food is medicinal with scientific evidence behind it and how it impacts everything from our mindset to our gut micros and DNA. Then I've complimented the science with 100 everyday recipes. I'm trying to show your plate in connection to positive health, not just for weight and cardiovascular, but in all aspects - mind and body.

Have you heard of the book *Gay Men Don't Get Fat* by Simon Doonan? It poses the question: if man food is meat, and girl food is salad, then what's gay food?

[Laughing] I've heard of that book but haven't read it. It's a good question but I don't think food needs to be gender specific. When it comes to eating salad or meat it's up to the individual. When we subscribe to the idea that men eat steak and two veg it's kind of a compliment, but we may actually be more inclined to like an egg salad. Ideally there should be a balance.

Do you have a personal favourite recipe?

Probably the one my mum taught me before I went to medical school, which is the Thai Lemongrass Curry from the book. It's delicious with basil, lemongrass, coconut milk and lots of vegetables. It really kicked off my fascination with food and trying out recipes. The book skips through many different cuisines, cultures and generations.

What's your secret junk food indulgence?

Well, nothing is ever forbidden. The way we talk about food as cheating and feeling guilty falls a bit into obsession as well. I'm always careful talking to a patient about the "guilt free" aspect. I'd encourage people to eat less of the indulgence and more of the other, but don't feel bad if you cave! I certainly don't feel bad when I eat lamingtons. They are deliciously amazing! It's one of my favourite Aussie indulgences.

What about Aussie fish n' chips?

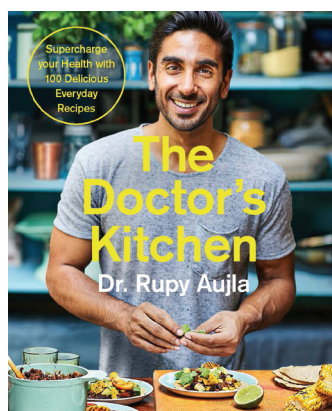
Definitely. While living in Manly Beach I would go to Fishmongers where they did a deep-fried barramundi. That was so good. I feel like some right now!

When you lived in Sydney did you ever venture



DNA: IF YOU WERE GAY, WHO WOULD BE THE ONE FOR YOU?

George Clooney. I'd like to be like him, but he's also extremely handsome!



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up Oxford Street?

Yes, I have gay friends there and one of my closest mates would take me to Oxford Street to help him pull! We used to go to the Colombian and he'd make me his wingman. In fact, he would always promise he'd do the same for me - he still owes me! **Were you ever chatted up yourself on any of these expeditions?**

I'd be lying if I said not! I do find it very flattering. I'm always up for chatting as I'm a very chatty person! I have a lot of gay friends in the UK and I also used to live in Brighton, so it certainly has happened, especially during Pride Festival where everyone lets loose. But the number of guys I ended up talking with did not impress my girlfriend at the time. She was very protective!

Who's your music diva?

Mariah Carey. Her Christmas song has been blasting everywhere over the past month. When I was a kid in the '90s I loved Ace Of Base. *All That She Wants* was my favourite.

From over in the UK, were you aware of the same sex marriage debate that went on over the past few months in Australia?

Yes, and it was quite uncomfortable to watch, having gay friends in Australia, and here in the UK who have every right to marry. It's been quite harrowing to see it play out. Australia has been behind in lots of ways, but now it looks like that issue has finally won.

Does Dr Rupy wear boxers, briefs or freeball?

For me it's fitted boxers. We call briefs Y-fronts here and I don't think I've ever worn them. I did wear budgie smugglers once at a boat party, but usually I'm more boardshorts.

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