

Announcer: Bulletproof Radio. A state of high performance.

Dave: You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's cool fact of the day could have implications for the future of our meat, because science is looking for ways to build a better burger, but without cows. To group of scientists, for similar reasons, are looking at opposite ways of changing how meat is made.

Dave: One of them says we're just going to grow the edible parts of the animal. The other one tries to simulate meat with plants. And the basic idea for culturing meat in a lab, starts with cells from an animal, and they put those cells on little beads or other scaffolds, but them in a bioreactor and then they use growth factors and nutrients, usually that come from plants after a lot of processing or something like that, and to multiplying the cells. And it looks like two dozen startups are now working on ways to use lab culturing techniques, that aren't perfected yet, to make food.

Dave: And cultured meat is one of the two high science endeavors to get animals out of agriculture. The other group wants to take every bit of the animal out of agriculture and make meat from plants, which is kind of like making plants from meat. As in, you can't really do it, but that's just to the side.

Dave: And there are folks in molecular biology of identifying proteins or other molecules that give meats their flavor and textures, so that they can then take junk food and then make them taste like meat. Oh wait. Sorry. That wasn't in my actual script here that I prepared ahead of time, but that's what they're doing. I don't care if it tastes like meat. If it's not meat and it doesn't get processed in your body like meat, it's not the same thing.

Dave: So now, the USDA is taking the first step towards rules for growing meat in labs not farms. And the FDA just convened it's first public hearing to talk about regulating food grown from cells. Now, these are interesting, and if you wanted to feed, say, a colony on Mars, this might be a helpful kind of technology to do it.

Dave: But there's just one problem, as a small farmer, I have four sheep and two pigs. You actually can't have healthy soil without this amazing thing called poop. And poop comes from animals. I can tell you, where my sheep poop, I have amazing soil, and where they don't get to roam and graze, you just don't have good soil.

Dave: So the idea that you can remove animals from agriculture is a fallacy, and the idea that industrial fed, mistreated animals that are crowded onto land they can't sustain them is bad for soil and for human life, is also true. So just like almost anything, there's a Goldilocks zone. Too much, too bad, too little, not good. And this is true for nutrients. It's true for water. You can drown in water, and you can die of thirst, but maybe there's a medium level. And having animals in agriculture is really important, and that's what we're going to talk about on today's show.

Dave: Grass-fed meat. What's different, how you can get it, and why it matters for the animals, why it matters for the planet, and why it matters for how you're going to think and behave after you eat it?

Dave: That means that of course I'm interviewing Micheal Salguero, who is the head of Butcher Box, currently one of the largest, if not the largest, supplier of ethically raised, grass-fed meat that you can get sent right to your home at affordable prices. Micheal, welcome to the show. I'm happy to have you on.

Mike: Yeah. Thank so much for having me.

Dave: Now, long time listeners know that Bulletproof is one of the companies that helped to put grass-fed on the map of important for human health. So we're the people who put grass-fed collagen out there as an important food for nutrition and performance and grass-fed butter, we created a global shortage of it in 2014 from coffee. And if you go to Whole Foods today, you'll see grass-fed yogurt all over the place.

Dave: The demand for grass-fed comes from this science behind that animals that eat grass create different dairy. They create different meat, different nutritional profiles, less toxins, better soil. All of these things.

Dave: But you had to go somewhere and buy the stuff for 20 bucks a pound, especially at the beginning.

Mike: Yup.

Dave: I started caring about this when my wife was infertile. And I did the research, and I said, "I want to restore her fertility."

Dave: We ended up writing a book about what we did to have two children at age 39 and 42 without IVF. My wife's a doctor, a medical doctor, and she now works with global clients on restoring fertility and having children without IVF. And every one of her clients is on grass-fed meat. Pastured protein. High quality eggs. Because it's hard to get pregnant when you eat sick animals.

Dave: What got you going in this grass-fed movement?

Mike: Actually, the exact same thing.

Dave: I knew you were going to say that.

Mike: So, my wife has Hashimoto's, which is a thyroid condition, and it's an inflammatory response. So we started looking at our diets. Both of together were doing a bunch of elimination diets, starting with the easier Whole 30 diet, and then moving onto more hardcore elimination diets.

Mike: And everything that we saw, everything that we read, every piece of research we did, said exactly what you just said, right? It's eat a diet of pasture raised animals. Eat a diet of grass-fed beef. And I started looking for it and couldn't find it anywhere, and when I did find it in one store ... I live in Boston, so in one Whole Foods in Cambridge, which is super wealthy, super high educated area, it was like ground beef and a couple of other

cuts, maybe some rib eyes and some New York strips and that's it, and that was a little non compelling to me. Because I like cooking. I like cooking different cuts of meat. I like making stews. There's a lot of stuff I like to do with beef, and just eating ground beef was not really that exciting.

Mike: So I started looking, and I'm one of these obsessive people, especially when it comes to thinking about problems and how to solve them. So I started trying to find grass-fed beef. And I ended up contacting a farmer in Albany, or near Albany, and started buying cow shares from this farmer. So this farmer would-

Dave: I've done that too.

Mike: Yeah. So the farmer would drive like a truck full of meat to near Boston and you'd get your trash bag full of meat. And the first time I did that, I didn't have enough room in my freezer to put all the meat in, because I lived in a small apartment in the city. So I actually gave some to my friends and said, "Here, take this because I can't fit it in my freezer."

Mike: Six months later, I bought more and this time my friends were like, "Oh, next time you get that meat, definitely get me in on it." So I bought more, and then six months after that I ended up buying a whole cow and splitting it up and selling it to a bunch of friends and coworkers.

Dave: But you kept all the rib eyes for yourself?

Mike: Yeah, of course.

Dave: Yeah?

Mike: You got to keep that stuff for yourself. Right. So yeah. I split it up and sold it and made my share for free, and one of the guys was like, "This would be so much better if it was just delivered to my house."

Mike: And I was like, "Oh yeah. That would be good." So then in my typical fashion, I just got obsessed about how would I send meat ... First of all, how would you source this stuff, like nationwide, etc, but then also how would I send it directly to your door?

Mike: So that was a whole rat hole of trying to figure out how it all works and whatnot. And I ended up meeting the former head of operations of Omaha Steaks, who opened up some doors. So Omaha Steaks is a huge steak in the mail company. He opened up some doors and we just got going.

Mike: So September of 2015, so about three years ago, we launched a kick starter, and like we talked about before the show, my expectations were modest. I didn't think that ... I knew there was a market, but I didn't think it was very big. I thought this was a very niche thing.

Dave: Kind of like mold-free coffee.

Mike: Right. I was like whoa. So Kickstarter, we went out to raise \$25000 and we raised that in like 30 hours or something. And we ended up doing \$215000 in 30 days. Also, the day before our Kickstarter launched, consumer reports cover story was the case for grass-fed beef, which was like wow, I guess timing was pretty good on that.

Dave: Yeah.

Mike: And then we got picked up by a bunch of like ... The Today Show did this taste testing. We had the Ink, and a whole bunch of others writing about us. In my previous life, I ran a different company which has a lot of parallels, which is really interesting, but it was called Custommade.com, and we connected artisans and craftspeople with consumers. Raised a bunch of venture capital, did that whole thing.

Mike: So this was like the anti-that. I didn't want to do that. I wanted to just run a business. Do it the old fashioned way. And what we found was that people had the same need that I had. Like lots of people, whether they listened to your podcast or read your blog or were trying to follow a certain type of diet and went to their grocery store and couldn't find this product and were like, "What do I do?" People are looking for humanely raised antibiotic hormone free, pasture raised, kind of all the claims, and don't know where to find it, can't find it, and when they can find it, it's incredibly expensive, and we're looking for a different solution.

Mike: I'd like to say that we did a whole bunch of testing and whatnot, but we didn't. We just kind of launched, and people were like, "Whoa. Wow, people are really interested in this. This is pretty interesting."

Mike: And that's basically how we began. And we've always had an eye on ... We don't have any investors. We always have an eye on wanting to align what we want to do for the customer. We think it's possible to have a company that services the customers and our members really well, gives them an incredible deal, gives them great cuts they might never had tried before. Also, get the farmer enough money so that they can actually make a living doing the work that they want to do, and also treat the animal well and the environment well all at the same time, which is a pretty lofty goal. But it's a noble cause to be waking up for in the morning.

Dave: This past weekend, I was at the XPRIZE a visionary circle, and this is with a Peter Diamandis and the guys who put together a 10 million dollar prize for the first private space travel.

Mike: Yup.

Dave: Business took the gloves off, so now we have Richard Branson and Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos building these spaceships and all, based on one big prize. And one of the prizes that got the most attention this year was raising small farmers out of poverty. This was mostly targeted at developing nations, where they're saying we're going to use our

ability to innovate around technology and supply chains in order to help small farmers get their product to market. But what was missing from that conversation is that, in the US, about 90% of small farmers have a day job, and it's not farming.

Dave: They cannot make ends meet on a small farm, whether or not they're doing cattle or sheep the way I am, or pigs, or just chickens and eggs and vegetables. And they work just as hard on their farm as they do their day jobs, so they're constantly exhausted and it's financially burdensome, and they're lucky if they make a few bucks at the end of the year.

Dave: And part of that is because they're selling it wholesale or they spend a lot of time selling, and I'm intrigued by what you're doing, because I know that there's overwhelming demand for high-quality, healthy, tasty meat that comes from ethically treated animals who were not fed antibiotics and were not crowded in to pens. And I don't eat industrial meat. I don't do that because it's bad for my body, it's bad for the planet. I think it's ethically questionable, so I don't know how to go about getting that meat. I do know where I live, I can get it from my neighbors or I can get it from my own animals.

Mike: Right.

Dave: But I didn't use to live here. And part of the reason I live here is to be able to do that.

Dave: But when I'm traveling and all, there's just no opportunity. And if you live in a big city, unless you have a hook up like you did, you have a friend who goes off and does ...

Mike: Yeah.

Dave: There was no way to do it, so you'd go to a big grocery store and they might have something, and it might be from an ethically treated animal, but it didn't support a small farmer. It supported a larger company, and it may or may not taste as good, and it was very expensive.

Dave: And you've cracked all of these things where you're supporting the small farmers in the US so they make more money than they would have.

Mike: Yup.

Dave: You're supporting soil, because when animals poop on soil and you have the appropriate level animals, especially on land that's good for grazing but not good for growing stuff, you're actually helping everything. And did you envision that whole system of making the farmers better off as well as the animals and the planet at the same time you are saving people money? Or was that saving ...

Dave: I mean, it's kind of surprising.

Mike: Yeah.

Dave: But I'm seeing all these things coming together, and like was it strategic or is this kind of just like I just want good meat?

Mike: I mean, it started as just trying to find my wife some good meat to eat. And no, but what's amazing is ... So I told you my last company, Custom Made, we raised a bunch of money from Google and First Venture Capital, and a bunch of other people. And our pitch deck had a feedlot as one of like the first photos. It was a feedlot and then the second photo was a happy cow. And it was all about how people don't know their meat comes from this, and it was talking about transparency and productions. So how would you do that with a dining room table?

Mike: And it's amazing the signs that show up in your life early on that ... It was like the business was there, I just didn't know. And so no, I did not think of that. And to be honest, it's an ongoing challenge, because as you said, it's really hard to be a farmer, a small farmer, the system is set up to make it very challenging for farmers, and I think we can do a better job of helping small farmers, while guiding ... We like to call it guiding the large and helping the small.

Mike: So there are lots of small farmers out there that need a lot of help. They need a market, they need access. And then once you have a market and access, they need help with getting a truck there on time, and then they need help figuring out how to deal with paper work and POs and financing and all that. And on the large side, there are a lot of, or I would say a handful, of larger companies, medium to large sized companies, not huge ad companies, but large companies, that really want to do the right thing and need guidance. Frankly, need to be shown there's a market and they need the guidance.

Mike: So it's a really interesting spot that we're in. I'll give you one example, which I found fascinating. We don't have the solution for it yet, but we're working on it. And it goes back to your raising small farmers out of poverty. So basically every cow starts out the same way. It's six months cow/calf, meaning it's a cow and it's mother, and then a year of a cow just on grass. So the yearling just basically spends a year eating grass, and then 98% of the cows go to a feedlot where they're fed a diet of corn and grain and then other stuff to put on a lot of weight.

Dave: Induced diabetes. Right.

Mike: Yeah. Put on bunch of weight as fast as possible using a cheap input of corn and grains. 2% stay and just eat grass. So when I got into it to meet these farmers, it's like, "Well, why don't you just keep more of them grass? You'd get paid more?"

Mike: Well, it turns out that all the loans that they get expire after 18 months. So they have to trade that cow. So even from a banking perspective, the bank does not give them an extra ... You basically have to keep a cow on grass for another 10 months. So you have to keep the debt out there for another 10 months.

Mike: So generally, these people don't birth the cows, because that's a whole other thing. They purchase the cows after six months, and then they raise them for that year long

period and then they have to sell them or else they owe the bank a crippling amount of money that they can't afford.

Mike: So when you get down into the actual nitty gritty of what's happening in the business, it's really fascinating. So antibiotics is another. So we're never ever, which means the cow is never administered the antibiotic. [inaudible 00:17:45] a cow is really expensive, so you've got a small farmer, they've got thousands of dollars on the line and it's ... In some ways, I feel bad about the fact that I say to them, "Hey look. I recognize it's a 75 cent dosage of antibiotics, but we can't have it because our customer would never allow that."

Mike: And there's all these structural things that are set up to basically make it harder and harder and harder for that small farm to be able compete.

Mike: So where do we stand, right? So, first and foremost, we want animals that have gone through some sort of humane treatment standards. So whether it's GAP certification or certified humane, there are organizations on the ground, making sure that people are doing the right thing.

Mike: In addition, we obviously have standards in terms of antibiotics, hormones, all that stuff, that all of that's out and that these animals are treated incredibly well. And you keep talking about the soil, which I think is incredible interesting, where the research is coming out that if you pasture raise an animal on the land, which you've seen in your backyard, they poop, they walk on the poop, and it basically creates new grass in ways that is very exciting. You can basically take a field that has been over farmed and put animals on it and it turns into a grassland, which is a carbon sequence [inaudible 00:19:19] thing, so there's lots of really interesting benefits to choosing this type of meat.

Dave: It's something that I didn't understand fully until we really had animals, and sheep are annoying. Our sheep are sort of ... They think we're part of the flock. So if they escape from their pasture, which we used to just let them do on purpose, they just walk up to the house, and they sit on the front porch and look in the windows. Like, "Hey, what are you guys doing in there? We should be inside."

Dave: And they've tried to come in the house. The problem is that sheep are not like dogs or even pigs. Pigs, they go to the corner of the side, they poop in the corner because they're not meant to fertilize by Mother Nature. Sheep, they just walk around pooping like it's just no big deal, and they have no idea where they're doing it, why they're doing it. It's just built in.

Dave: So it's awesome, because if you're a pasture, you're going to get even spread of manure, and then they walk on it and you see this vibrant green grass that grows. And the pasture right next to them that they don't go on is not the same grass.

Mike: Yup.

Dave: Unfortunately for my front porch, they also think it's a pasture. Which is why you don't want sheep there. But when you switch to another kind of animal, pigs, their role in the ecosystem is to root things up and to turn over the soil. So where we put the pigs, they get rid of all the invasive plant species, and they take a forest that would be ready to catch on fire, which is a big issue up here in British Columbia, and they'll actually remove underbrush and pile it up and turn things over. So they reduce fire risk and they prepare the soil, which is profound.

Dave: So when you realize, this is how the world works, and when you have this sort of ... I don't actually know where the mindset comes from other than just a complete disconnection of nature, where people are saying, "Well, I'm only going to eat vegetables."

Dave: It's like do you know how we did that?

Mike: Right.

Dave: And when I talk with permaculture people and people doing biodynamic farming, and we do a lot of both here, they're all saying, I don't know how to get the right plant nutrients unless you have this virtuous cycle. And if we eliminate that with monoculture, which is what ultimately happens if you say I'm only going to eat soy based and tofurkey-

Mike: Right, soy beans. Yup.

Dave: ... I'm concerned about our soil. I'm concerned about our ability to reproduce as a species as human beings. It's that big of a deal.

Mike: Yup. And soil, I mean soil is such a ... The amount of life that is soil, in good soil, it's teeming with life. And I recognize ... I don't want to denigrate the kind of argument around, look it's a life, I don't feel comfortable taking the life of an animal. But again, if you go into that monoculture world, I mean, there's lots of things that are not happening that would be happening if there were animals pooping on that land and stomping it into the soil.

Dave: Would you be okay if I denigrate that argument?

Mike: Sure. I'll let you do that.

Dave: Here's the deal, Mike. I was in Tibet and I was learning meditation at a monastery, and it was a 10 day program and the deal was no killing. So it was vegetarian diet, and I went to the head of the monastery. And Tibetan monks love arguing. They're trained to argue since they're young children [inaudible 00:22:49] of 10 older kids around them, all yelling arguments at them. And they'll have to remain calm and make arguments. It's actually beautiful to see.

Dave: And I said, "Hey, you're a hypocrite," Of course, I hadn't quite figured things out, "You're a hypocrite. You have a yak skin on your prayer pole. That's killing."

Dave: And he laughed at me. He goes, "Yes. One death feeds everyone."

Dave: And that was his whole answer. And so I went back, and I had been a raw vegan before I went to Tibet, and I said, "You know what? I'm going to figure out deaths per calorie."

Dave: And I can tell you that if I eat a pound of grass-fed meat a day, which is more than is healthy, and it's grass-fed, 0.7 deaths per year. Now, if I was to eat a tofurkey, or a tofu burger, or a potato based fake burger, the amount of habitat destruction ... And okay, I see what tractor kills look like. If you are lucky enough to be in a farm area that still has butterflies and ladybugs and grasshoppers and cute bunnies and turtles and mice and snakes and salamanders, after the tractor goes through, they're all cut into pieces.

Mike: Yup.

Dave: So if you think that you're eating a vegan, death free burger, I'm sorry. You need to switch to the gravel based vegan diet, and you're not going to live.

Mike: Right.

Dave: And so, you're destroying the soil, you're killing more animals through habitat destruction than you are if you incorporate grass-fed sustainable, regenerative agriculture in your diet. You have a moral obligation to do this, because a world without farm animals that are ethically treated and ethically raised is a world without soil.

Mike: Yup.

Dave: It is that clear.

Mike: Yup. And it's a bigger and bigger problem every year that we let this continue. Right. So the more that we can move people ... We actually have a lot of I call them recovered vegetarians, but we have a lot of people who are like, "Okay, either health wise I'm having a real hard time just eating beans for protein or eating vegetables for protein," or they've caught on to this kind of argument of like, "Wait a minute, this doesn't feel right. If I'm worried about life, this doesn't feel like the right move."

Mike: And they come to us because they're like, "Okay, if I'm going to eat this type of meat, I want to make sure it's to the highest standard possible."

Dave: Yeah.

Mike: And it's really fascinating. So to answer ... About 20 minutes ago, you asked a question did I know all this stuff when I got into it? No. But it's really exciting. The more that we peel back the onion and the more we realize just how important the soil is, just how important carbon sequestration is, people think I'm crazy when I talk about how actually

putting animals on the soil might be the only chance we've got to help the environment in terms of could we make a carbon neutral meat? Could we make it emission free, whether that's buying offsets or measuring the actual carbon emitted from cows out on the field?

Dave: Mike.

Mike: Yeah?

Dave: I've got good news for you. I mentioned XPRIZE earlier. In a small way equal to my means, I'm helping to fund the creation of an XPRIZE around sucking carbon out of the atmosphere using solar powered things so that we can actually use it to build blocks. So maybe we'll have a farm where the fencing is made from carbon we've pulled out of the air to make the fence, so that then we can keep the cows from going onto the neighbor's property and pooping on their front porch, which is not cool.

Dave: But I truly believe, just like you, there is an ethical, there is a moral, and there's a survivability reason that incorporating moderate amounts of grass-fed animal protein is important because, if they're not in our environment, they're not these big methane producers. I saw statistics someone posted arguing about the whole carbon cycle, saying a pound or a kilo of meat takes 4000 gallons of water.

Dave: If you feed it corn and soy and you truck it across the country and you have industrial agriculture, that's probably true.

Mike: Yup.

Dave: I can tell you that my four sheep, in two years, have used 1000 gallons of water in total.

Mike: Yup.

Dave: All right? And it came from the sky because we just capture rainwater. Like it wasn't that big of a deal. And so the differences are profound, and all these arguments about don't eat meat or whatever, they're always based on the assumption that everyone eats industrial meat.

Mike: Yeah.

Dave: And there isn't a name, and Mike, maybe you and Butcher Box can come up with a name or I'll help, but what is the name for people who only eat ethical, local, grass-fed meat? We're not vegetarians, we're not vegans, we're not standard american diets, we're not paleo and we're not omnivores, but we actually care so much about the animals and the soil and the planet that we choose the type of meat that we eat. What's our name?

Mike: Yeah, I don't know. We call them conscious consumer, or the conscious customer. When we talk about ... And that's not a good answer, but we talk about is it's the awakening.

It's when people realize they're like, "Wait a minute. This is crazy. Why would I eat this product when I can eat this product over here? Why would I put my dollars here, when I could put it over here?"

Mike: And we're seeing more and more people getting awakened and figuring out that grass-fed, ethically sourced, is way better. And that's really exciting. I think the meat industry ... Defend the meat industry ... The meat industry just responded to what people in this country thought was important. So in the 50s and 60s, people thought meat that needed to be as cheap as possible, so they figured out a way to take corn and antibiotics and make a larger animal.

Dave: Dinosaur chickens with hulk level chicken breasts who can't walk.

Mike: Yeah. Because people want cheaper and cheaper, and they didn't care about anything else. And now, what's happening is people care about that stuff, which is through our efforts, through your efforts, through other people out there, are really helping people to see that that's not the right approach. But it's going to take a lot of work to convince the average customer.

Mike: We go to meat conferences and stuff like that, and this industry is a rounding error in the entire meat world. It's tiny. I mean, it's nothing. It's 2% of the entire market in the US. It's really important to me, it's really important to your listeners, but in terms of like the impact and stuff like that, I mean, we've got a ton of work to do in order to get people more on this path.

Mike: And then, even in grass-fed, just as a short tangent, what's happening in this country is people are like, "Oh yeah. People like grass-fed. Okay. Let's figure out how to put that into the system we have already."

Mike: So what you're seeing is more and more companies coming out with a confined, grass-fed product. Confine the animal, feed it grass, because we can just do that right next to everything else that we're doing.

Dave: It's probably still healthier for you than confined corn and soy and genetically modified antibiotic treated, etc, but it's not good for the animal, and it's not good for the soil.

Mike: Right.

Dave: It creates concentrated urine puddles and all that kind of stuff, and it's getting hard, from a labeling perspective, to know are you getting ethically raised, ethically butchered meat? But that's actually what the market demands, and I hope that there's some meat industry people listening to this show who are saying, "Wait. You mean if I tell the story, the truthful story of how my meat is produced, that it will be worth more?"

Dave: It is. And here's the challenge, and is something that is a part of the bulletproof diet. Hay, spends twice as much on your meat and then people, mind blown, they don't have enough money. That's cool. Eat half as much.

Mike: Yeah.

Dave: You don't need excessive amounts of protein. You have two to four ounces of grass-fed meat, you'll be full if you put enough fat on your food. And yes, grass-fed butter is shockingly affordable. It's about three bucks for a pound of that. That'll fill you up fast. And you actually will spend probably more on vegetables than you will on the meat in your meal, because it's hard to get enough vegetables in a modern diet. And I'm actually working on some way to improve that.

Dave: But when you look at that meat component, you say well if I just go with that, you're hungrier faster and you don't get the nutrients, and the soil doesn't benefit and the farmers don't benefit. So I consider that non-optional. Yes, I make vegetarian meals sometimes. I go out to a vegan restaurant, because I'm not going to eat industrial meat anyway. But on a general basis that there every argument lines up, whether it's animal cruelty, whether it's economic, whether it's sociological, environmental. I can't think of a reason that this is a bad idea, unless you're allergic to meat or something, in which case you probably are going to be eating fish.

Dave: Do you see a world, 10 years from now, 20 years from now, where there's so much demand for ethically raised, grass-fed meat the way that you're making at Butcher Box, that we run out of places to grow cows?

Mike: No. Certainly in this country you do. It's very hard to raise grass-fed beef in the US, but there are countries like Australia that are, you know ... Australia's has 26 million people and is very large and land is cheap, versus the US where land is very expensive and cows need a lot of land.

Mike: So no. I mean, I've seen the argument before. But honestly, if we were innovating around how to feed more animals the input that they were designed to eat, I think we could figure out ways to do that and it would not be a concern. It's not a concern.

Dave: What would you think if some technology focused entrepreneur came out with an algae based cow feed? I'm just making this up. [crosstalk 00:33:06]

Mike: No, that's out there. That's out there.

Dave: Yeah, that replicated the benefits of grass. So they're not grass-fed, but they're free roaming and they use big algae pellets and they poop and they're actually regenerating soil in an arid region where they might not otherwise be able to do it. Would you eat that?

Mike: Would I eat it? Would I eat if regularly, or would I ...

Dave: Would you eat a cow that at that instead of grass if it was nutritionally complete?

Mike: Oof. Jeez. I would try it, that's for sure. I don't know if that would be my ... I like the whole idea of back to nature, which is on our logo. It's on our box.

Dave: Me too.

Mike: It's like one of the things we talk about, which is like nature intended these animals to eat a certain way, and all we're trying to do is bring them back to that. So algae, sure. If that's a [crosstalk 00:33:55] I have heard about this algae that helps them to fart less, and therefore helping with the carbon thing. And I think ... I mean, look. I'll try anything, and I would try it, but I don't think that that would be a staple of my diet. If I'm going to eat meat, I want it to be the highest quality possible, raised the way that nature intended.

Dave: I'm with you, and I'm also looking at that at how we're going to feed nine billion people-

Mike: Yeah. Right.

Dave: Assuming that human fertility rates remain high enough for us to keep growing like that. People aren't aware of how hard it is to get pregnant today because of the health of our species. But if more people ate grass-fed meat, they'll actually be more fertile, so maybe that's the downside that we [inaudible 00:34:50]

Dave: But anyway, there may come a time where we realize that we need to have these animals in areas that are deserts. So there's no grass to eat, so truck in the algae. Make nutritionally complete meat. Let the animals go out and turn the desert back into proper soil. And this is not what mother nature intended. It's not how mother nature works, but if we have to pour some gas on that fire to make it happen faster, I'm all in support of it. And I'll eat that, and I bet we can even engineer the foods to have a bit more Omega-3 or more [inaudible 00:35:20], the stuff that's already in grass-fed beef.

Mike: Yup.

Dave: So I think we're going to have to become more aware stewards of our environment when we put on our 10 and 20 year hats. In the meantime, let's just get more people in our neighborhoods raising a few cattle, because now it's profitable and because there's a market. And I couldn't be more excited about that, and that's why watching Butcher Box since you were first founded ... We had some conversations when you first got going around your first Kickstarter, and now I look at where you are and I'm damn excited. Because you can get high quality bacon, and we haven't even talked about pigs yet, but quality pork has the almost amazing fat ratios for our bodies. And bad pork is one of the worst things you can eat, because pork accumulates toxins the way humans do, because pigs have a system that uses their kidneys instead of their liver.

Dave: Your liver's a good filter, and your kidneys aren't very good ones. So humans and pigs both use our kidneys and that's why we're so susceptible to toxins and heavy metals and things. And if you're feeding moldy corn to pigs, we know what happens. So that's why they feed it to pigs in feedlots right before they're going to butcher them. The pig won't have time to get sick from that food. They'll just get fat. And then, of course, those bio-accumulate.

Dave: And that's not cool, but when you get clean pork the way you're doing at Butcher Box, it is profoundly good. It tastes different and you get a food high from a pork belly that comes from a properly fed pig. And I'm excited in particular because you have a limited time thing you're doing with Butcher Box, and people who listen to this show probably heard a Butcher Box ad. But people who go to [Butcherbox.com/Bulletproof](https://www.butcherbox.com/Bulletproof), use the Bulletproof code, save 20 bucks on your trying some of these amazing things, and get free bacon that's only on for a limited time. But if they sign up with you, I think they get free bacon for life I think it's for some period of time.

Mike: That's right. Yeah.

Dave: And I can tell you having bacon that way is amazing, and it's a very different experience unless you burn the bacon.

Dave: So this is a hack for all of you who haven't read [inaudible 00:37:33] Diet. If you cook your bacon until it's crispy, you've basically damaged the fats and you've damaged the proteins, and it's going to taste good but it's going to be inflammatory. But if you take this amazing bacon from Butcher Box where the pigs actually ate the right foods and they're heritage bred and it's very different than what you're used to getting at the store, and you cook it on low or low medium so it doesn't sizzle and splatter and you cook it so that it's still soft but it's fully cooked, you get this amazing flavor. But most importantly, when you're done eating it, you feel really good. And the fat that's left because you didn't burn it isn't smoked. It's still usable for cooking, and if you make fried eggs over medium temperature, fast not fried, in that bacon grease, that's what your grandmother did. That's what your great-grandmother did.

Dave: And if you do that and you feed it to your kids, you'll see your kids eat fried eggs like you've never seen in your life, because they're the best food you'll ever have. And if you're really a badass, instead of doing over easy, get a little propane torch or a culinary torch and you just wave it over the top of the egg so the top gets a little bit firm. Blowtorch your eggs. I got a video doing that.

Mike: Wow, jeez.

Dave: So that's how to do it. That's in my cookbook.

Dave: So anyway, I kind of digressed here a little bit, but I just have to say it. The difference in how you feel matters, and that's why .... And I wanted to actually bring this up. At the Bulletproof Café in Santa Monica, we only have grass-fed and wild caught, and we always have. And I learned maybe 10% about the supply chain compared to what you know for grass-fed meat, and some of the issues for restaurants ... I wanted to actually feature local small farmed beef, and it turns out a lot of times for restaurant standards, they won't let you do that. They require mega-butcher facilities and things like this, which are not particularly cool because that means that some of the very best meat out there you can buy it at home, but you aren't allowed to buy it at a restaurant.

Dave: And I found that really frustrating, and we've worked our way around it as best we can so it's always grass-fed. But some of the locals, you can buy it, you can cook it, but I'm not allowed to do it for you. And that makes me mad. Do you see regulations changing so that it'll be more acceptable? Or is it going the other way?

Mike: Yeah. I think it's probably going the other way, and I don't necessarily think that's a bad thing. I think we need to figure out how to use technology in a way that helps make sure the cows going in are the cows coming out and that there's no way to mess up what meat you're getting. These large processing facilities can clean the lines and there's a lot of work that needs to be done to make sure that the right cows are going through.

Mike: One of the big learnings that I had in this business was I went into thinking big is bad. Big is always bad. So from the slaughterhouse perspective, there's kind of two slaughterhouses that ... I toured a lot of slaughterhouses, but there's two types. There's the super small one where local farm comes in and they're doing maybe 50 head of cattle a week. And then there's the super large one, which is like, and this actually small on the scale of super large, but 2000 head a day.

Mike: Totally different scale, and if I were a cow, and if I were trying to do, which we are, trying to do the most humane thing possible, I actually think the larger one is a better place. Because the small one ... When you're doing 50 a week, there's really no incentive to have it be as quick and rapid and as humane of a killing as possible versus the large ones. So what you find is if you look at the affidavit of write ups, you find that the bolt gun stops working, but nobody really cared because it didn't really matter.

Mike: And when you're at a large scale, that bolt gun ... They can't stop the line. Picture an auto factory, like the line doesn't stop. So they do things to be more efficient in the killing in a way that was actually kind of surprising and mind blowing to me in terms of which ... There's always two sides to the coin of where do you want to think about the issues.

Mike: Restaurants are super interesting as well, because there's no regulation around labels. Like zero. So you can literally say whatever you want. It happens all the time. So that all natural, grass-fed product that you're purchasing, there's really nobody coming into that restaurant and inspecting it and saying, "What is that? Where is it from?"

Mike: So obviously going to the Bulletproof Café, somebody would know that you guys give a shit about where your meat comes from and I've done the research. But in a lot of places, you can charge more if you call it something different. And unfortunately, it happens, so more and more I just end up wanting to eat home. The more I know, I'm just like okay, let me just eat my own product at home.

Dave: Yeah. I grow my own food when I'm at home, but I'm on the road about 150 days of the year.

Mike: Right.

Dave: And also, I have to thank you. To be willing to talk about the butchering process, no one wants to think about that.

Mike: Yeah.

Dave: And to be open about it ... Here's the deal. If you don't eat meat, many animals die that you aren't paying attention to, including sentient ones beyond insects. And the more monoculture, the more grains that you eat, the more animals die, a lot of them. And you don't have to think about it, but it's happening. And if you choose to eat industrial meat, which I simply don't do. I won't put it in my body. I don't like how I feel when I eat it, and I think it's cruel and I think it's bad for the world.

Dave: And if you do that, you can almost guarantee that the animal died in terror. And if you with an ethical supplier, you go and you look at these slaughterhouses to make sure that it's done without suffering, without cruelty, minimizing fear. And I had to get comfortable with that as a small farmer. Our two pigs are going to become bacon, right? And I know their names. We've fed them every day, and we feel ethically very clean about it and that we've given them the best, happiest life possible and they will be slaughtered actually very ethically. We're having a family member who's very experienced at running a farm, come out and help do it [inaudible 00:44:33] local processing and all that.

Dave: And look, if you're going to be alive on this planet, something's going to die in order to feed you. Whether it's a bacteria, whether it's a plant and the whole ecosystem, and whether you're comfortable with that or not, it is a fact of being alive. So the deal is how do you make sure that, given that happens, how do you minimize it and how do you make it happen with minimum suffering and with fewer deaths for calorie you eat?

Mike: Right.

Dave: And I think there's away to do it, and grass-fed beef is necessarily. And these pastured animals, they are a part of the world. And eliminating those does not eliminate suffering. It does not eliminate an environmental burden. It creates an environmental burden. If we're living in a world with just vegetables and humans, it's not going to be a world that works.

Mike: Yup.

Dave: And so thank you for just being ethical and paying attention to the hard part of created grass-fed meat, so that you know, when you're putting something on your plate that you cooked at your house, that the entire thing from how an animal is born, how long it lived with its parents. Six months is a long period of time compared to what a lot of ranchers do, and that's also part of being ethical.

Dave: So getting all of the steps right. And I've talked with you before, I looked at what you're doing, and Butcher Box pays attention to all the steps. So the system creates super high quality food, and a high quality of life for animals, and better soil. And that's, ultimately,

bulletproof, where you're saying what impact do they have on the world around me, and did I treat my body with the utmost respect so that I can show up all the way every day?

Dave: And I can tell you, if you're eating garbage meat, you're not going to show up the way you're capable of showing up ever day. And it matters. It matters greatly, and that's why I'm stoked to see that it's now both possible to do what you and I both did 10 years ago, which was call the farm and, "Hey, can I buy only a fourth of a cow, because my fridge is not big enough? Can I get the right cuts?"

Mike: Right.

Dave: And just do away with all that. And what you've done is you've found this rounding error in this monstrous industry that does bad things to our soil, our water, and our animals, and say, "Actually, there's goodness here. Let's find the goodness. Let's make it accessible."

Dave: So man, I'm truly grateful that you've just done the hard logistics in the supply chain, and you're just doing it with integrity. So full kudos to you for doing that.

Mike: Thank you.

Dave: Now, I want to talk a little bit about you. Your first big company, founder made, like you said earlier, it did the same thing. You found all these artisans doing crazy dining room tables and lamp fixtures and custom jewelry and all, and found a way to connect them with people they couldn't find before.

Mike: Yup.

Dave: And now you're doing the same thing, though instead of creating diamond rings, they're creating artisanal beef and pork in ways that are in alignment with ethical values. Why do you keep going out and finding all these crazy artisanal people, bringing them together, and then making them accessible to others? Like what's driving you to do that?

Mike: You know, honestly, I don't know. I feel like I'm being driven rather than I was the driver. In both cases, what I've found was the internet and technology does some pretty incredible things in terms of connecting people that, otherwise, could not be connected.

Mike: So the retired navy submarine driver who lives in Pennsylvania in Amish country and has a small shop in his basement and makes the most amazing beds you could possibly buy, has no access to a market in California or in Texas or in even New York. And it turns out that because the internet exists, that person can now snap some photos on the project they're working on, can post it, can talk to people, and we can just take care of all the details behind the scenes.

Mike: And what I think is really interesting ... So what I love is leveraging technology to go into old world businesses and kind of flip them on the head. So I'm very much the kind of revolutionary. I talk about this ... Actually, I just talked about this with my company, but I have this vivid memory. When I was in college, the world economic forum was in New York City, and I was part of the protestors. So I was on the other side of the fence with a picket. I don't even remember what I was protesting.

Mike: But I was just angry and wanting change in the world, and I had a voice in my head that said, "If you want to change the world, you need to be on the other side of the line, of the fence. The other side of the fence."

Mike: And that fundamentally changed my perspective and my path. I believe that you can run a business and do it ethically and treat your employees well and treat the world well, and do things that, utilizing the tools that we have, to connect people that otherwise would not be connected and, frankly, are being marginalized because like we always said. You could get a dining room table from Restoration Hardware, or you can get the same one made by a local artisan that's better quality and less price. Like why would you ever choose one? It doesn't make any sense. Of course everyone is going to choose the other one.

Mike: So it's been quite the ride. In the first business, my co-founder and I set out. We raised a bunch of money like we talked about, and ultimately it didn't work the way that we had hoped. Mainly because customers don't want to go through ... The reason why they want to go to Restoration Hardware is that they don't want to go through all the choices and all the back and forth and all the nitty gritty of specifying what a bookshelf should look like or what a dining room table should look like. It's too much.

Mike: I think this is different because food is so sacred, and it's a religious experience. Eating food is just like ... It's a ritual. You go home. You're with your family. You put dinner down in front of yourself and your kids and people just care so much about what they're consuming and what they're feeding their children. And I care so much about what I'm feeding my children, and this one it has felt right from the beginning. It felt like it's really my calling.

Mike: And you know what's crazy is, getting on the personal entrepreneur thing, so my mother collects cows. So growing up, I had cows and piggy banks. Her grandmother collected piggy banks. So I grew up and I had so many cows around the house and pigs, and you know it's just funny how it's like, oh wow, it was always there. I just didn't quite realize it. I like to tell people that when they're like, "How do you come up with your ideas for companies?"

Mike: It's like, "You know, let me tell you how I lived around all these cows." I'm like never. I never put it together. It took me 32 years to put that one together. 34 years. Whatever.

Dave: I did not know that, and that is hilarious. So it was right in front of you the whole time.

Mike: Yeah.

Dave: Like I believe ... And this has been a part of Bulletproof. I believe that something has shifted where it used to be we wanted to just save money on food.

Mike: Yeah.

Dave: So I'll buy the cheapest possible food that makes me feel full, and I found that that led me to be really sick. And I believe now that people are actually grateful to pay a little bit more for a lot more quality, whether it's furniture, whether it's meat, whether it's food. Because they realize that how they feel when the thing that holds the toilet paper doesn't fall off the wall, when you just don't buy the cheapest possible junk ... And the internet has led, on one hand, to the explosion of the cheapest crap you can buy.

Mike: Yup.

Dave: Like when's the last time you bought something that lasted more than two years of almost any kind of consumer packaged good? So I am opposed to that, but I still know how to go online and tell if I'm buying something high quality versus low quality because the sticker's there.

Mike: Right.

Dave: But when it comes to something like what you're doing with Butcher Box, like here's the stuff that's in it and you get the box of it. And you can tell when you eat it and you have all the steps. So I think that the internet is now ... First it was, "How do I get access to all the cheap crap?" And sort of the distribution of lower quality stuff that's highly convenient.

Dave: And now people are saying I've had enough of that. I don't want to throw away my toaster every year. I don't want to eat industrial meat. I don't want low quality, and I'm willing to pay slightly more. And if you can cut out some of the layers of distribution and marketing and all that, and you can be connected with one level of separation away from a small farmer or artisan, it's actually worth more. Because it feels better as a consumer, and what you get is noticeably better. It's that noticeable effectiveness.

Dave: And I would challenge you listening to this. Try Butcher Box. Only eat grass-fed meat for two weeks or a month, and just if you go out to eat and you're not eating at home, just have the salad and don't put the industrial chicken on there. And just say, this is all I'm going to do, and watch the quality of your thinking as you do that. And you will notice the difference, because when you eat animals full of hormones and glyphosate and antibiotic residues, it effects your gut bacteria. They affect the quality of your mitochondrial behavior. They affect the quality of how you think and the level of inflammation you have, and you can actually think differently, and I would even say you can be a slightly upgraded human being, just by taking the bad stuff out of your diet for that period of time and replacing it with the appropriate amount of high quality, grass-fed animal.

Dave: It changes who you are. It changes what you're made out of. It's that big of a deal. So give that a shot, and just realize you're spending a dollar and a dollar can support feedlots, waste reservoirs full of basically rotting cow and pig poop, which are a huge problem in the southern US. Or it can support a small farmer who's regenerating soil and you're going to enjoy it more if you do that, because you know the effect I had and you feel better because you got the right stuff in your body.

Dave: And that's why I wanted to do this interview. That's why I'm just overjoyed to see that you've solved the problem that personally I've spent a lot of time talking to small farmers, trying to get the right cuts and all this, to the point I live on a small farm. And now, that problem is solved, especially to people who live in cities.

Dave: So man, thank you for your work, Mike. Thank you for making Butcher Box. It's super legit. And I have one more question for you.

Dave: Someone comes to you tomorrow and says, "Mike, you've been an entrepreneur. Now you're a dad. You've done all sorts of things. I want your advice. I want to perform better everything that I do as a human being. What are the three most important things that you'd offer me as advise. What would you say?"

Mike: Oof. All right. So number one, exercise. I think exercise is incredibly important. Not just going for a walk, but doing some sort of heavy lifting. I do cross fit. I do interval training, so I would say exercise is a huge one.

Mike: Number two, this is kind of going on a little bit of tangent. Is that okay?

Dave: Oh yeah. Absolutely.

Mike: So I was mentioning this before, but I've recently gotten my mind blown with this conscious leadership group. And essentially, I'll give the short version, which is I'm sure you meditate or have meditated. Right?

Dave: Yeah.

Mike: Okay. So meditation is all about you trying to calm yourself, you try to breath, and your mind wanders and then you gently bring your mind back. And then your mind wanders and you gently bring it back. And your mind wanders and you gently bring it back. And you might sit for a five minute meditation and your mind wandered like 25 times, at least mine does.

Mike: And what the idea of this conscious leadership is, is they call it above the line thinking and below the line thinking. And essentially, to understand that you, as a human being ... So above the line is creativity and excitement and big thinking and vision, and below the line is fear, dread, anxiety, oh I got like just really grinding it out. I'm trying to figure things out.

Mike: We as human beings are ... Just like we are designed to keep falling out of listening to your breath, we are designed to go below the line more than we are above the line because it's safer. So you think about being a caveman. Is it safer for you to be thinking big vision, or for you to be like, "Oh, jeez. I better be safe when I walk out of this cave?"

Mike: Unfortunately, in today's world there's so much overstimulation that you can just fry yourself out by staying in that fear, anxiety world. What has been a huge game changer for me, and very recently, is to understand that that is actually just a state. And if I can just remind myself, just like I do when I'm meditating, and say, "Oh, go back to the breath." If I can just realize that that is just a state that can just be changed by just saying, "Oh, jeez. I'm below the line. Let me stand up. Let me walk around. Let me do whatever to change how I'm thinking."

Mike: That has been an incredible, incredible change, and I would say that's number two. And the third one, and I learned this now in my second business, my first business I was the 80 hour a week work my butt off entrepreneur. First one in the office. Last one to leave. Got to set the pace. And this one, a few things happened. One, my first business didn't work out the way I wanted it to. Two, my first daughter was born, and I was like, "I don't want to live like this. I don't want to be the last guy here. You know what I want to do? I want to go home and be with my kids. And if that means the business grows slower, or that means I need to hire more people to build a team around me, like I'm going to live the life I want to live.

Mike: And most people, when they think about starting a company, they don't think about lifestyle design. They think about how to go raise money, or how do I get this thing off the ground, or how do I grind it out for two years, and then I'll take a vacation, rather than being like, okay, let's just start off with what do you want out of life? Where do you want to live? What do you want to do? Do you want this to be like a full time thing?

Mike: I have people write ... It's a book by Cameron Harold, but it's called the Vivid Vision, which essentially-

Dave: Yeah. Cameron used to coach me.

Mike: Yeah.

Dave: I like Cameron.

Mike: Yeah. He's part of that genius network too, I've heard.

Dave: Yeah.

Mike: So three years from now, what does the world look like? You walk into work, what does it smell like? What did you eat on the way to work? Did you have a workout? Did you not have a workout? Did you walk to work? Did you drive to work? Did you bike to work? Did you take the bus to work?

Mike: Okay, you walk into your office, do people say hello? Do you go to back? Are there lots of people? Are there no one? Like write it out. Creative writing exercise, what do you want?

Mike: And what I've found is that tends to come true in many ways. Like you set your intention of what you want in the world, and then the stars align and you're able to kind of put the pieces together. So usually, if I meet people who are like, "Oh, how'd you do it? What do you do?" I start by telling them things like that, which are very internal, very like, "Okay, what's the big picture?"

Mike: And generally, that frustrates people, because what they want is some sort of answer like, "Oh, here's how you hack Kickstarter to do what you want. And then, you can do this other thing, and then go raise money from this person."

Mike: That stuff is easy. That's the easy part. Figuring out how to start an LLC and get insurance, to me, you can go to the internet and find that stuff. What I found is that the most successful people are the ones that know what impact they want to have in the world and the life that they want to lead, and then they just spend their time trying to work their day around doing that. Not doing all the other stuff.

Mike: That's not to say there's not times that I'm up super late working and grinding out, trying to figure something out. But it's a game of percentages, right? It's about how do I ... Being intentional about the life I want to live is incredibly important, so those are the three.

Dave: Beautiful, beautiful answers. I appreciate it, Mike.

Dave: If you've enjoyed today's episode, you really owe it to yourself to do what I recommended earlier. Try eating grass-fed only for a couple weeks to a month. You can go to [Butcherbox.com/Bulletproof](https://www.butcherbox.com/Bulletproof), use the bulletproof code, save 20 bucks, get free bacon and hopefully free bacon for life if they still have that offer up and running.

Dave: And more than that, just pay attention to the effect that the food you choose to put in your body has on the planet around you. There's so much evidence for the fact that mother nature needs a variety of animals out there helping to keep our soil healthy. Because our soil is disappearing at an alarming rate. We've allowed companies to spray poison on the soil that disrupts soil bacteria in a meaningful way. It's unleashed toxic mold and soil at levels that hasn't been before.

Dave: And we got to fix this, and we've got to fix this because soil sequesters carbon. And because without soil we have very large problems with our own survival as a species, as well as all these other animals that we all care about.

Dave: So you owe it to yourself, you owe it to the planet, to pay attention to that. And I would totally say don't just have a grass-fed steak once this week. Just say a short period of time grass-fed or nothing, and when you do that you will notice changes in your biology in your brain. And it's totally worth it.

Dave:

So go to [Butcherbox.com/Bulletproof](https://Butcherbox.com/Bulletproof), use the bulletproof code, save a little bit of money. But more importantly, get meat that's worth eating.