

**Nicki:** Welcome to the Healthy Rebellion Radio. This is an episode of Salty Talk, a deep dive into popular and relevant health and performance news pieces mixed with the occasional salty conversation with movers and shakers in the world of research performance, health and longevity. Healthy Rebellion Radio Salty Talk episodes are brought to you by DrinkLMNT, The only electrolyte drink mix that's salty enough to make a difference in how you look, feel and perform. We co founded this company to fill a void in the hydration space.

**Nicki:** We needed an electrolyte drink that actually met the sodium needs of active people, low carb, keto and carnivore adherence without any of the sugar, colors and fillers found in popular commercial products. Health rebels, this is Salty Talk. Now the thing our attorney advises, the contents of this show are for entertainment educational purposes only. Nothing in this podcast should be considered medical advice. Please consult your licensed and credentialed functional medicine practitioner before embarking on any health, dietary or fitness change. Given that this is Salty Talk, you should expect the occasional expletive.

**Nicki:** We're rolling.

**Robb:** So according to your dad, you're talking too softly-

**Nicki:** Okay, I will project further-

**Robb:** You're being inconsistent in your projection.

**Nicki:** Okay, I'll project differently.

**Robb:** Welcome to another edition of Salty Talk.

**Nicki:** Thanks hubs. I accept your constructive criticism.

**Robb:** Thank you, and I raise it with a small caliber gun to my head. So what's new, what's exciting?

**Nicki:** I will just raise my coffee with my new LMNT chocolate salt addition.

**Robb:** It's pretty darn good. You've been putting in a little bit of whole whipping cream with it, and it's pretty good. What are the other flavors?

**Nicki:** We've got a lemon habanero and a mango chili.

**Robb:** So we did some cultural appropriation, stealing all that there was to steal out of Latin America but luckily-

**Nicki:** Luckily, we have Luis on our team.

**Robb:** Louis is Mexican so it's not full robber baron, baronry, but.

**Nicki:** They are quite tasty and a significant departure from the standard-

**Robb:** Kind of fruity-

**Nicki:** Kind of all fruit, all sweet that is tends to be most commercial electrolyte beverages.

**Robb:** They are amazing as a standalone. They are even, I would say more amazing as a drink base but for the love of God if you open one of these up, open it away from your nose and eyes. Because if the powder or dust gets into a mucosal membrane before it's dissolved in water, you're going to have a rough day.

**Nicki:** They're not too spicy. They have a nice little bit of heat kind of on the after part of your palette. I don't know how to describe that.

**Robb:** The after palette?

**Nicki:** The after palette. Anyway, it's super excited to see what y'all think you can try out the three new flavors in a 12 count pack where you get four of the chocolate salt, four of the lemon habanero, and four of the mango chili and see what you think, but I think they're pretty good.

**Robb:** They're pretty darn good.

**Nicki:** Let's see. What else do we have to announce today? Oh, just another reminder, we're getting closer to our next 30 Day Rebel Reset inside the Healthy Rebellion. That starts on September 14. Now we've mentioned that in recent episodes, but want to make sure any of you all who are thinking of participating and aren't yet members of the Healthy Rebellion want to give you ample opportunity to jump in and join us. It's always a good time.

**Robb:** It's going to be a wang dang.

**Nicki:** A wang dang. What else? Should we just jump into-

**Robb:** Get after it-

**Nicki:** To today's interview. You interviewed a friend of ours, Hamilton.

**Robb:** I did, Professor Hamilton Stapell. He is a professor of history at State University of New York New Paltz, and has been a dear friend of ours for a very long time and really a largely behind the scenes but incredibly important person in this bigger ancestral health story. New Paltz actually developed a, when people went to in person classes, they developed a whole evolutionary studies curriculum around ancestral health, that I had some really high expectations for and someday on a future Salty Talk, when I'm caring less about whether or not we're still online, or if we're going to be canceled, I might unpack some of the challenges that they've faced rolling out this EvoS program.

**Robb:** Hamilton very early on, I think because of his background in history, started looking for some parallels with the then growing Paleo Diet concept and movement and saw some really powerful parallels between the CrossFit the Paleo diet and the physical culture movement of the early 1900s. He did an initial talk on that and then he and some folks that he works with, they've done three different surveys around what is the demography of the folks in the ancestral health scene, who's in, who's not in, what does all that stuff look like and made a case around who's in it currently?

**Robb:** Where might this thing be going in the asked a really important question, will it go mainstream? Then this most recent piece is kind of a retrospective, it's where now and to some degree, where did the Paleo Diet go? Compared to the fervor that it had say like 2013, it's really kind of drifted into comparative anonymity although I think its

effects are pretty powerfully felt but Hamilton and I talked about a lot of different stuff and it's interesting to me because we really lived through this.

**Robb:** We wrote the first New York Times bestselling book in the Paleo Diet genre. There wasn't a Paleo Diet section in the bookstore or on Amazon prior to the release of the Paleo Solution. So pretty interesting to get some different perspectives on where everything went with that. Also just some of the bigger, I guess, social discussions around access and privilege and stuff like that.

**Robb:** We really dug into some interesting things. Just all things food, all things ancestral health, and it was a long talk. We ended up I think going an hour and 15 minutes. Could have gone far longer than that, but we'll probably circle back with Hamilton in a future date. He has another paper that is not published yet, but is in review and once that thing drops, then we'll probably pull him back on.

**Nicki:** Awesome. Awesome. Well, let's jump in.

**Robb:** Let's do it. Hamilton, how are you?

**Hamilton:** I'm great. How are you Rob?

**Robb:** Really good. Now where on the planet are you these days?

**Hamilton:** I am in the Hudson Valley, in New Paltz, New York.

**Robb:** Awesome. Awesome. Well, so we've known each other, going on 10 years now. 10 years? Longer than 10 years?

**Hamilton:** 2011 maybe.

**Robb:** So I did an intro for this podcast separate from this but can you give folks a little bit of your background to just flesh out a little bit of your worldview. You are a professor of history by training, but then you got plugged into this ancestral health scene very, very early on and have made some of the most remarkable contributions to this whole experience and movement that anybody is done. So it'd be great for folks to know a little bit more about you and your history as it relates to ancestral health.

**Hamilton:** Sure. Thanks, Rob. I appreciate it. So back in 2002, I came across a book called The Health Secrets of the Stone Age by Philip Goscienski and that was my first introduction to ancestral health, the whole paleo thing. It really resonated with me and then I started to read more, follow more people, follow your work, follow the work of Art De Vany, for example, Mark Sisson, and it really seemed like there was something there.

**Hamilton:** There were some real there, there that I hadn't really experienced with other diets, fitness trends, lifestyle ideas. So, again, it really struck a chord with me. So I learned more and then when the first ancestral health symposium came around in 2011, in Los Angeles, I submitted a poster and went out to Los Angeles from New York and had the most amazing experience with everyone there including with you. So I presented a paper about how we can use ancestral thinking or the Paleolithic template to teach about evolution, and how evolution informs us about how we might live a more healthy lifestyle today.

**Hamilton:** So that was my initial foray into sort of research, if you will, on the topic. I wrote an article with some co authors and put together this poster presented the poster at 2011.

That really got me going and then, really, I can see seemed of this larger research project, thinking about where this all came from, ancestral health movement, where we are today, and then where things might be going in the future.

**Hamilton:** I really created three talks, and eventually three peer reviewed papers on that topic. So the first talk I gave was at Harvard in 2012, about how the Paleo movement was so similar to the physical culture movement of 100 years ago, and that was, to this day, I think one of the best talks I've ever given. The material was so good. The audience was so engaged, and for whatever reason that day, I feel like I just nailed it. So sometimes that happens, right?

**Hamilton:** I was super excited and that talk can be found on YouTube, and I'm super proud of it and I've gotten a lot of positive feedback on it. So that's how it was about looking at how what we're doing today really isn't so new in a lot of ways from what was happening 100 years ago in European and in United States, but it's largely forgotten. The second study, it was, I ran the first academic survey of the Paleo community and that was in 2013.

**Hamilton:** I presented those results at Paleo FX in 2013 about hey, who's doing this? Why are they doing it? What do the demographics look like? We can talk more about that later because it relates to my most recent publication. Then third, and finally, I wrote a paper and presented a talk on the future of paleo. That was also actually in August, of 2013. The same year, and I had a provocative title you might remember. It was called the End of Paleo. I think the subtitle was like, Are Things Going Mainstream? I don't Think So. So that was a fun talk to put together and I basically made a series of arguments about why paleo was important, and a significant movement, but was not going to penetrate to the mainstream.

**Hamilton:** There were significant obstacles and those were cultural, physiological and social and that talk can also be found online as well if folks are interested.

**Robb:** I'll get links to all of that in the show notes for this episode. I've got your CV pulled up and also all of your talks, so I'll make sure all that makes it in the show notes so people can track it down easily.

**Hamilton:** That's awesome. That's awesome. All three of those talks were turned into peer reviewed, well, two went into peer reviewed journal articles and one went into a book chapter, a peer review book chapter. So they've all been published as well. If I could just segue to today. So now, five years later, five years after 2013, some co authors ran another survey of the ancestral health community, a five year follow up survey to see like, hey, what changed, right? Are people doing the same things in the same way for the same reasons, or have things really gone in different directions? So that was always in the back of my mind to run a follow-up survey five years later, and we were able to pull that off and I just published those results, also in a peer reviewed journal.

**Robb:** Awesome, Hamilton. So maybe you could unpack some of the second talk and I guess that would be the first paper where we really looked at the demography within the kind of Paleo Diet ancestral health space. There were some surprises, some just more kind of reaffirming what you would take from looking around the AHS Floor or Paleo f(x) or what have you. Like it seemed very representative of what you would see at those was events.

**Hamilton:** I'm just pulling up my notes here so I get all the data correct. So, the way I set the talk up was this, was I saw at the time, this is back in 2012 2013, a certain media stereotype

of the Paleo world. This media stereotype tend to be white, male, young, meat eating, and some vanity or egotistical thing mixed in there as well. So I was really interested like, is this what the population, the community really looks like or is this misleading? So we ran the survey, and some of those things turned out to be true. Some of those stereotypes showed up in the data, and some of them not so true.

**Hamilton:** Maybe I can run through a couple examples. So in terms of similarities, is definitely white. So 91 92% of the response of our survey were white. So that part of the sort of stereotype does hold on. Not so much with men. The majority of our respondents to the survey were female, about 55%. So that was maybe not so surprising if you really paid attention who showed up to the conferences but maybe surprising to most people because there seemed to be this male macho meat eating thing.

**Hamilton:** The other point I would say is that this question about vanity and I guess it depends on how you unpack this. So, the two main reasons people cited for going paleo were, one weight loss and to recover from illness. So you might say weight loss is about vanity, and maybe for some people it is, but I think for me, my sense is that for most people, that they've struggled with different approaches to weight loss.

**Hamilton:** For whatever reason, our society the medical community haven't been able to serve people very well when it comes to being overweight and obese. So people turn to alternatives, alternative lifestyles and paleo is one of them. So I think it's perhaps less about vanity when it comes to weight loss and more with dealing with serious health conditions. That brings me to my second point about trying to resolve unsolvable health conditions.

**Robb:** The things that Western medicine just doesn't do as well as dealing with like gunshots and getting hit by a bus. Yeah, which it does amazing work there but then in this chronic degenerative disease world, it really hasn't produced stellar results so far.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, I completely agree. So conditions related autoimmunity, to metabolism, to mysterious sinuous things, like just across the board that people have struggled with and, again, they've turned to some kind of alternative, some kind of alternative paradigm to try to help themselves because the traditional conventional medical community is serving their needs.

**Robb:** Right. Hamilton, so the podcast peels out into two different flavors. One of them is this Q&A that Nicki and I mainly do and then the Salty Talk episode is usually an interview, sometimes it's me putting together a talk and kind of losing my mind about a particular topic and everything these days is highly politically charged, polarized like everything. It just seems like there's landmines and quicksand everywhere. So if you want to take a hard pass on this, you are more within your right to do this, but I remember both early on and even more recently, there was some pretty heavy criticism leveled at the Paleo ancestral health scene, that it was disproportionately white.

**Robb:** It was disproportionately wealthy and this was put forward as kind of a slight on the movement, and I've always been perplexed by this, because it's not like I've tried to hide any of my material behind a wall that was economically or ethnically delineated or anything like that. It's always kind of been my thought that whenever any movement pops up and you're a historian, so you may likely have a much better perspective on this, but different movements will pop up within different groups. Then to the point that I think you make later asking the question, will something go mainstream, yes or no, it kind of needs this like 15% of the population buy in and all that type of stuff.

**Robb:** To the degree that this was going to have effect, it was always my sense that it was going to be a bottom down or bottom up experience, like people driven by interest, driven by need would find information and take it on if that seemed appropriate, or not, but I've always been really perplexed by, I guess, this notion that we're not doing enough to get this out to everybody. At the same time, I'm also kind of stumped, like how do I, as a white heterosexual male, do I start going door to door knocking on folks doors and saying, hey, you look a little overweight, you're definitely have a different ethnicity than me, but I've got the goods.

**Robb:** Why don't you change everything about your life and I've got all the answers. That seemingly is kind of, it's really interesting. I know I'm not asking a particularly good question, but where do you feel like the moral obligation is in trying to do more in this space? I've always just tried to help as many people as I can and I love it when folks are in different communities and they're able to spearhead this and I feel like they're much better representatives of the material to their particular group than I am. I'm honored to play any type of role I can to facilitate things but are you getting kind of the general gist that I'm going to at here?

**Hamilton:** I am, and I think you're asking a really important question. I really do and I think it's important to talk about it. I am absolutely disappointed in the lack of diversity within movement, and I'm absolutely disappointed that the movement couldn't broaden a way to include more people, more diverse community, a more inclusive community that would allow more people to have access to this information. If they want to buy into it great, and if not, that's totally fine, too. What you're saying about this being white and privilege is absolutely correct. This shows up in the data.

**Hamilton:** It is incredibly striking, how wealthy the respondents are to our surveys, both in 2013 and even more so in 2018, when we ran the follow-up survey, how educated they are, how many resources they have. So let me give you one example. From our most recent survey, 77% of the respondents have a four year degree or higher. 77%. I mean, the national average is about 33. So that's well above double into the national average.

**Hamilton:** We can look at income as well, household income. Over 50%, pardon me. Over 50% of the respondents' household incomes are higher than \$100,000 a year. That's again, about double what it is nationally. 10% of the respondents to our survey, household income was above \$250,000 a year. So this is a very elite segment of the population and we can talk about why that is and I think part of it is access to resources and education and free time to pursue these alternative ideas. Where many people, many populations don't have that same time and ability to do that because of their life circumstances. So I think it's tied very much to social economic status.

**Robb:** For sure. I know this is not a simple thing to unpack, but what is it that we could do better in this story? I've long maintained that the people who can afford to eat say, like pastured meat as an example, we need to basically subsidize that process until it becomes the default mode and that a Walmart or Costco iteration of a paleo diet is just fine and is far superior to eating bagels and soda and all that type of stuff, but what are some of the things that can be done to better spread this material because you could make the case that due to this economic disparity, the people who really need this information are the people at the lowest socio economic levels, they're already disproportionately negatively impacted.

**Robb:** They're already facing these challenges. We just know that development of children is so incredibly tied to nutrient availability and nutrient density and whatnot. So it seems like this is something that should be sung from the rooftops but for a whole host of

reasons, like the Paleo Diet a fad, the fact that it's for elites seems to then discount it, but shouldn't in some ways that inform us that like, well, actually, maybe that's what everybody should be looking towards even on a public health perspective.

**Hamilton:** You ask another really important question there. I guess I'll give two answers. The first answer will be terribly unsatisfying and that is I'm a historian and I am much better at like, recognizing patterns, synthesizing data, making arguments about the past and perhaps the present. Looking forward, this is not my wheelhouse, or this is not my where I typically have a lot of experience or it's just not the sandbox that I play in. It's a very important sandbox and people like you and others have spent, I would say, their careers trying to say, hey, how do we spread this message? How do we help people the best that we can.

**Hamilton:** I'm more like, hey, what is going on in here and how did we get here? So, I know that's not a very good answer to your question but let me sort of say that first as a disclaimer. Then if I was going to venture some sort of answer to your question, I don't think the Paleo community was and is meeting people where they are. I don't think we can, I think it's very difficult for us to, I mean, I don't have the same lived experience as people who live in a food desert, or have the same access to information in the time that I do. There are, privilege is a big word today, but I really do have a lot of privileges, in terms of the position that I have in my career and education that I was privileged to attain.

**Hamilton:** So I think it's about trying to meet people where they are and I would echo what you said also, Rob was that, I think we have to be like, it's almost like a cliché, but I think it's important here. This sort of like, white savior complex. Like, here comes the white man to come in and save-

**Robb:** Whoever.

**Hamilton:** People of color that don't know any better. I personally want to be sensitive to that. I sure as hell don't have all the answers right. I don't know how that I personally can do. I need to think more about what more I can do to broaden the knowledge of this subject.

**Robb:** Heartfelt apologies for putting you in any type of hot seat. This is just something that I've been devoting a non trivial amount of bandwidth to, like really trying to think about how is it that I'm approaching this? How can I better help and serve people? Clearly nobody has the right answer on this, otherwise paleo would have gone mainstream. It would have transformed the health of the poor and the marginalized and it would have dramatically improved the lives of hundreds of millions of people. That in my mind is kind of the unfortunate opportunity missed with where we are currently, although it's interesting, and I guess maybe we'll work into this as we go.

**Robb:** Some concepts like carnivore and keto, I've seen getting some pretty good traction within different ethnic communities and I don't know if it's because it's a simpler message, is just like, just cut out the carbs or hey, just cut out all plant material. So there's not as onerous of an educational process in some ways in my mind. It's a very simple, heuristic on both of those terms versus like this kind of paleo thing that was very fluffy and open ended. Even in the nutritional research. It was oftentimes kind of like, okay, they used the Paleo diet. Well, what does that mean?

**Robb:** Was it a higher carb or a lower carb? Did they use fruit or they use starch? There was a lot of moving parts, whereas at least with keto, there's kind of a binary biological marker. Are you in ketosis, are you not? Then we kind of get into hash out details from there, but it's been interesting. I've seen seemingly much more buy in within folks from

different ethnicities with these alternative approaches. Have you seen anything like that in the data or is this perhaps a little bit on the newer side or what are your thoughts around that?

**Hamilton:** I don't see it in the data. Let's see. Our most recent survey asked people, if they no longer follow paleo, what were they doing? That subset of our data was not very large. So we don't have a very large N number there specifically of people who no longer follow paleo. Let me give you some specific numbers so everyone can understand. So we had 1,500 total respondents to our online survey, which for an online survey is like good, that's darn good. 250 had left paleo and were answering additional questions about why me. So we only had 250 and that's not very large and we didn't ask a huge number of questions to that population.

**Hamilton:** What I will say is this is what is interesting is that, so for folks who no longer follow a paleo diet, that's about 250, the largest percentage of people responded following no particular diet.

**Robb:** Oh, interesting.

**Hamilton:** 40%. 40%. So, it's like, what the heck? Are those people now eating just Twinkies or did they incorporate certain paleo eating patterns and ideas into their lifestyle and they no longer consider themselves paleo? That's the other option. So it's really hard to say. The second most popular response was low carb, 13% and then ketogenic diet at 10% and Mediterranean comes in at 3% behind that. There are some vegan and vegetarian down there as well.

**Robb:** Oh, wow. Wow.

**Hamilton:** 1%.

**Robb:** 1%. It is interesting though, it's tough to tell what that 40% means because how much is their day to day lifestyle influenced by that stepping into this? Maybe they still eat quality protein and they get lots of fruits and vegetables, and they incorporate it in rice because they do well with it. So now they're no longer paleo but they've clearly had potentially a pretty remarkable shift from the standard American diet.

**Hamilton:** I completely agree. I completely agree, and just to more fully answer your original question. We didn't break those numbers down by race. So I don't have that data, like how many people of each ethnicity or race or eating low carb. Those numbers start to get so small we only had 32 people respond low carb. That's not very powerful analysis there when you have so few people.

**Robb:** For sure, for sure. Hamilton, talk to us a little bit about the most recent, or let's hear. So we talked a little bit about the origins and then what the demography was of the Paleo diet and then you had your zinger, which was will it go mainstream? I don't think so. Let's talk about that. I think you were very prescient in that and I think surprisingly, like I ended up largely agreeing with you straight out of the gate for a whole host of factors, but one you're much smarter than I am and two, that seemed to be some of the trends that we were seeing anyway. Then I will throw a little caveat in there.

**Robb:** At the very first Paleo f(x), one of the questions was where do you see the Paleo Diet going and I said, I think somebody will create a brandable flavor of paleo that will establish some kind of arbitrary lane lines that self versus non self almost creating a cell



membrane around it and they would probably sail into the sunset winning the whole lot which was largely what Whole30 ended up being and in doing.

**Hamilton:** Interesting, because I thought you were going to say Max Sisson.

**Robb:** I mean, Mark went big in the sauces and whatnot, but from like a unidentifiable dietary approach, I think Whole30 has both had great magnitude and pretty darn good, longevity and I would argue that it's due, in part because this ancestral template probably is valuable. Then also they created some very, pretty stiff in some ways, arbitrary lane lines or guidelines, but it's at least a starting place to get people going. I feel like those characteristics were really favorable because I can't tell you the number of people that have said, I just could never eat paleo, like it's too hard. It's like, well, what do you do when they say, Whole30, which is always kind of hilarious.

**Hamilton:** Seems harder for me, Whole30?

**Robb:** Yeah, because of the rigid lane lines but you identified some really interesting, socio economic and cultural reasons why paleo writ large was probably not going to go mainstream. Could you talk a little bit about that 15% of the, like the early adopters, late adopters, and whatnot, and what that means for a particular movement to go mainstream. It's important to me right now, we just released Sacred Cow. We're really trying to talk about the sustainability features of a sustainable food system and there's a lot of drama and a lot of conflict and just it'll be interesting to see if we managed to scratch together 15% of the population on that particular topic as well.

**Hamilton:** There's so much in there. I love it. So much good stuff to talk about. As a side note, in the 2018 survey, a most recent survey, we asked about why you went paleo. Zero percent of people said environmental reasons.

**Robb:** Interesting.

**Hamilton:** Zero, like not a single person. I was shocked. Shocked. Again, it came down to like athletic performance or weight loss or recovering from illness, but no one said environment or sustainability. Which is still, given how hard you and others have pounded or hammered on that idea. I was really surprised that didn't see more people say for environmental reasons. In any case-

**Robb:** Fascinating. That's super fascinating though. It's a little disheartening, but also very interesting.

**Hamilton:** I'm sorry, man.

**Robb:** Hey, man, you can't kill the messenger and the facts are the facts.

**Hamilton:** All right. So you were asking about my 2013 talk in terms of what were the main obstacles I saw ahead for paleo, right? It's a little hard to imagine the context. So this was 2013. In many ways, the height of the Paleo movement. This was in Atlanta, the biggest conference that the health society ever had. There were hundreds, thousands of people, vendors, books, food, like it was an insane, insane time within the Paleo movement. It's a little hard to remember that. How much energy that was behind this movement, and going into that conference was when I really started to think about, where is all this going? The more I thought about it, the more obstacles I saw. The three again, we're cultural, physiological and then what I call social or value, and if you want, I can run through those.

**Robb:** I would love that, please.

**Hamilton:** So the first is cultural and I think people underestimated how deeply woven Neolithic foods are in modern society. It is literally because of agriculture and Neolithic foods that we have civilization. That is not an exaggeration. That is just the facts.

**Robb:** That was Loren Cordain's original paper, Cereal Grains: Humanity's Double-Edged Sword.

**Hamilton:** There you go. There you go. Beautiful. Yes. In my talk I gave lots of examples about bread within Christianity and rice within Asian cultures and corn within Latin American cultures, Latinx cultures. I give a lot of examples about how these foods, these neo lithic foods are really woven into our cultural practices and just not any normal cultural practices but things like weddings and religion. Like trying to pull those foods out of their cultural context, I thought was going to be really difficult, and there was going to be a lot of resistance by much of at least the American population. That was number one.

**Hamilton:** Number two was physiological. I presented a bunch of data about how Neolithic foods and industrial process foods are just seems pretty clear. They're highly addictive. They're engineered to be hyper palatable and there's a lot of research done on this. Looking at the way the brain lights up between chocolate cake and literally broccoli. So we can talk about how the crunch factors are manipulated by big food manufacturers to have just the right crunch and mouthfeel.

**Hamilton:** It's not an accident that processed food in junk food is so palatable and so widely eaten. If I can say one more thing on this topic is that we are evolutionarily programmed to seek out calorie dense, highly satisfying foods because we evolved in different environments of scarcity. So you put modern humans in a world of overabundance, not for everyone, but for many people make choices, make unfortunately low quality choices, but highly palatable choices and that leads to what's the word, understandable or like, of course, people are going to make those choices given both their evolutionary background and the current modern context they find themselves in today.

**Robb:** Now a quick word from today's sponsor.

**Nicki:** This Salty Talk episode is brought to you by Beekeeper's Naturals, the company creating clean and natural bee powered remedies that actually work like propolis throat spray. This throat spray is your daily dose of defense when it comes to naturally supporting your immune system and soothing a scratchy throat. With just three simple ingredients, the spray is powered by sustainably sourced bee propolis, an incredible germ fighter that contains over 300 beneficial compounds.

**Nicki:** Thanks to Beekeeper's Naturals obsession with research and testing, you can trust that their remedies are always clean and highly effective. When we first heard about Beekeeper's Naturals, gosh, three maybe four years ago and instantly fell in love with the propolis throat spray. I think it's probably, from a family perspective, one of our very favorite products of theirs. The girls love it when they even have the slightest scratchy throat.

**Nicki:** Even when they don't have a scratchy throat, mom I need some bee spray. That's what they call it, bee spray. Has a very pleasant taste and it actually works, like whenever we have any type of throat irritation. That's what we reach for.

**Robb:** We do indeed.

**Nicki:** You can save 15% on your first order by going to [beekeepersnaturals.com/THR](https://beekeepersnaturals.com/THR) and use code THR at checkout. Now we'll jump back into the episode with Hamilton Stapell.

**Robb:** Just to lend a little bit to that, our adoptive grandmother is from El Salvador and she had some health problems. We kind of helped her tweak things and is doing fantastically but she made the observation. She said, I could never get this to work in or it'd be very difficult to get this to work in El Salvador because there is a culture of as these folks go through the developing country process, as people gain wealth. Eating industrialized foods is a sign of affluence.

**Robb:** It sends a signal that you have plenty. Literally like the papayas and mangoes and stuff like that she's like, we don't eat that unless there's tourists around. That's peasant food and so that was a whole fascinating wrinkle to this story that when you already think about our tendency to eat everything that's not nailed down, that's just kind of baked in the genetic cake. Then you look at what food manufacturers have done, where they've said, oh, great, you want to eat everything that's not nailed down. I'll give you an infinite number of options and you go into a 7/11 and you've got 50,000 different options.

**Robb:** Then you have this story in which culturally there is value and status placed on the type of food that you eat. Now, ironically, this switches back around like you have to, when do we start saying, hey, don't wear shoes when you get wealthy enough to get into the barefoot running thing, but prior to that, shoes are pretty dam important thing. So it's funny how that cycles but that was really kind of a gut shot for me when she shared that where it was like, oh, wow. I do think that there are some interesting opportunities with reinvigorating traditional food systems which aren't necessarily paleo but are arguably much more sustainable and much healthier for their populations. It was interesting. It was an interesting insight to get that from her.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, that's a great point. I know there's been some work done with traditional Pacific Islander diets in reintroducing those diets into those populations.

**Robb:** So you had the cultural and then the physiological and...

**Hamilton:** I got one more. You're right. You're keeping me on track Robb. Thanks.

**Robb:** Cool.

**Hamilton:** I call it social or value. Question of value. So, maybe I came across a little preachy in this part of my talk in 2013, but the argument I made was that we live in a society that prioritizes transitory fun, sort of the moment, over true mental and physical flourishing, what the Greeks called a eudemonia. So a kind of whole wellness or well being or living well as one can as a being. It's really hard to translate eudemonia. It's not happiness.

**Hamilton:** It's flourishing. It's being well. So I laid out a number of different arguments about how people today seek short term satisfaction, instant gratification, happiness, escapism, escapism in video games, movies, TV, self medication. I tried to offend everyone. I blamed boomers. I blame Gen Xers, I blame millennials. I think it's an issue that we definitely saw in 2013 and right now, today things have sort of shifted because of it's this year 2020, all that's happened, but I think for much of the 21st century, we did have a significant economic recession, but still I think there's this push towards individual happiness and instant gratification which doesn't for me, didn't line up so much with the

overall goal of the ancestral health community, which is a sort of like more holistic, flourishing and in health plan a more holistic level.

**Robb:** Yeah. Almost kind of stoicism applied at a diet and lifestyle level.

**Hamilton:** Yeah. I personally had issues with, well, no need to go there. I'm going to say yes.

**Robb:** It sounds like a no. Going to say yes, but it sounds like a no.

**Hamilton:** I'm a European historian. I do a lot of intellectual history and I teach on this topic, around this topic. I know stoicism is quite popular today and I think there's a lot there but I think there's some limitations to stoicism as well.

**Robb:** Awesome.

**Hamilton:** I think I need to be on a different podcast-

**Robb:** No, we just need to do that on a separate edition of this. I think that would be super valuable to unpack. So Hamilton, kind of bringing us up to date. We are now at paleo then and now a five year follow-up survey of the ancestral health community and you've kind of alluded to some of that material already. Like this is some of what we looked at with regards to you were eating paleo, now you're not. What are you doing? 250 people said, I'm not doing much of anything and kind of where are we in this space with this story?

**Robb:** I know that you have another paper that you're working on that's kind of looking at what the factors were that went into altering the ancestral health model, but where are we in this space now? Every day, I see both rays of hope and also a bit of despair. I see a lot of people that are benefiting from these templates, these ways of thinking, these heuristics, but I also see ecological problems, I see people not, in my opinion, not really understanding the vast complexities of these ecological problems.

**Robb:** So making suggestions like a vegan diet for everybody will solve climate change and moral decrepitude and all number of things but where are we in this ancestral health story, and is there anything that can be broadly woven, kind of a meme or a cognitive contagion that could be valuable, that could be extracted out of this? I kind of thought that the evolutionary studies program, it was really itself coming on strong and even that has kind of flamed out to some degree. Where are we in this whole story?

**Hamilton:** Not a happy place, Robb. Not a happy place. When the article came out, the article we're talking about came out last month in July, July 2020. We and my two co authors tried to promote it on Twitter and Twitter's problematic in many ways, but it was curious. Sort of the biggest response was one of like, almost nostalgia. Like, hey, do you remember this paleo thing? It was like the slinky. Like, oh yeah, I had one of those 10 years ago. I did the Paleo thing.

**Hamilton:** So that was really striking about how yesterday, it seemed, at least within the social media world that I live and granted, that's a pretty small bubble. So that's one thing that really struck me. I think the other thing that is important is something you said earlier and I'm glad we can circle back to it. You were saying about how paleo, I can't paraphrase what you said but basically, there was a lot of baggage associated with paleo in some ways and for me, paleo has two big suitcases, two big pieces of baggage.

**Hamilton:** Oe is the whole evolution thing getting to buy into the evolution. Evolution, especially with how many Americans don't believe in evolution. The second one is this whole caveman thing. This whole dudes in loincloth, even our ancestors. I think too many people seem to undermine [crosstalk] progress, right. Exactly right. It just seems so counterintuitive. I'm going to eat like a caveman. That's a dumbest thing I've ever heard.

**Hamilton:** So I think paleo and even ancestral health, had that significant baggage that ketogenic diets, which you mentioned, don't. You don't have to talk to people about evolution, or guys in loin clothes or wearing no shoes. It is a whole different thing. I think that does help explain much of the popularity and I will say this as well is that it seems to me that the keto has also become the darling of both academic researchers and scientific researchers, and also in many ways in Silicon Valley.

**Hamilton:** So you see things like Virta Health, I'm sure you're familiar with and the company, Keyto, K-E-Y-T-O, Ethan Weiss, UCSF is associated with that. Using these modified ketogenic diets to treat metabolic disease. So I feel like there's far less academic interest in paleo. There's far less popular interest in paleo and paleo just isn't cool. Maybe it'll come back like Birkenstocks, come back around but at least right now, Robb, it really seems to be not what the cool kids are doing.

**Robb:** It's interesting that other than a very small group of folks, assuming that we're right about this kind of evolutionary biology assumption and kind of this broad view of we had remarkably good health in pre agricultural societies, arguably very predictable decline in that health and then we can restore it and even some of the who's the Australian researcher, Adele Hite, Adele, I'm forgetting but they took Australian Aboriginals who had been moved to cities started developing Western disease but they still had the skill sets to be able to go out and do their traditional lifeways.

**Robb:** For I believe, a year, they live that way, and they completely reversed all the metabolic diseases and whatnot. I guess some people would say, well, they just ate less and move more, which is true, but there's kind of more stuff baked in the cake of all that, but it is interesting that the Paleo Diet concept, it almost begs for a fight right at the beginning, like on just a bunch of different levels. The evolution story, the progress story, still, you see this constantly.

**Robb:** There was a guy that was talking about how, maybe it's an okay way to eat but these guys didn't live that long. So why would you want to eat that way and-

**Hamilton:** That still comes up again and again.

**Robb:** So it really is kind of a problem child in that way. It's ironic, because I'm a big fan of the notion that the superior operating systems in the world tend to win out. Maybe I was just flawed in my thinking that this was the superior operating system. It just needed the right type of marketing or messaging or maybe it shows just how completely broken and dysfunctional human beings are that they shoot this gift horse in the mouth literally.

**Robb:** It is fascinating that I think that these more binary approaches, like keto, that just kind of skirt most of the revisionist history type stuff and just go straight to the metabolic state and losing weight and kind of providing a, in theory like desirable endpoint, improve cognition, weight loss, maybe some longevity boost. That seems to work pretty well and I think to your point, the research community has certainly embraced getting into the ketogenic space. When you look at the amount of research going on there, it's really kind of jaw dropping.

**Hamilton:** Yeah. While we're talking about research, maybe I can bring up another topic. So I'm looking at a list of things that killed, that perhaps has led to a decline of the paleo movement. As we were kind of talking about them in some ways now, I think and the other thing, Robb, I think that really played a major role and I don't know if you agree with me or not, or maybe I'm making too much out of it, but was the 2015 paper In Cell. I've heard you reference this paper before, out of Israel.

**Hamilton:** They had 800 participants. They did this genetic testing, plus microbiome, and then they gave them these diets. What they saw was that different participants in the study responded dramatically differently to the same, dramatically differently. For me, what this really underscores is that no simple diet, so you shouldn't have to work so or put another way, public health is screwed. Because how can you, it seems clear, and it's very difficult to recommend any specific diet to any large group of people.

**Hamilton:** I think in some ways the people, some or perhaps even many of the people within the Paleo movement, were sophisticated enough to see this, maybe not this particular journal article, but this notion that hey, we all come from these different genetic backgrounds. We all have these different, we have different gene variation, for example, I'm APOE-4. So I metabolize fat and cholesterol differently. Standard high fat or a higher fat Paleo Diet just doesn't work for me.

**Hamilton:** It just doesn't and it's just a sad fact. So, I think increasingly there was a recognition within movement that the simple paleo prescription to avoid grains, dairy and legumes just wasn't going to work and once that simple prescription falls apart, it gets even more complicated. How do you begin to write a book saying oh, what you should eat because you're going to like say, oh, you need to have some gene testing and then maybe do some microbiome stuff. Then you got to have a continuous glucose monitor put on.

**Robb:** If you get a round of antibiotics, it may change the whole story of what first round of testing means.

**Hamilton:** So forget it, forget it. Can't do it.

**Robb:** It's fascinating. It's interesting, because on the one hand, I think there's a powerful move in a lot of different ways to kind of centralize authority more and more. Just authority in nutrition, authority in politics or whatever and the flip side is that I think that what we all need is more granularity and kind of decentralization. There's maybe some broad brushstrokes to get us well served.

**Robb:** Avoiding the middle of the supermarket is generally a pretty good recommendation. There's pretty good stuff that goes on there, but then beyond that it gets murky, whether or not you can really hang a whole lot on that, but yet there's, this is one of the concerning features that I have around this. Whether paleo became the dominant paradigm or not, there's definitely this move towards this kind of vegan centric paradigm that gets support from like the World Health Organization, the WHO.

**Robb:** There was the EAT-Lancet piece FAO, that was suggesting that reducing meat intake would improve the environment and it would help health and then there was actually some great rebuttals around that, where they said, well, if you removed animal husbandry entirely from the food system, it would only reduce greenhouse gas emissions by like 2.8% and if you reduce the protein intake that folks have, they're going to overeat other nutrients and they're going to be nutrient deficient because of the lack of kind of nutrient dense animal protein.

**Robb:** So it's fascinating that we're in this time where personalized medicine really seems like the way forward. I think it's really in its infancy and there's a lot of goofy stuff, like I don't think you can poop in a bag and have somebody look at it and tell you what your diet should be from that. Not yet. Maybe someday, but then at the same time, that's just stark juxtaposition to this tendency to consolidate or to want to consolidate the final say in what our food and food systems are at these kind of distant, inaccessible places. It's just a very fascinating time to watch all this stuff develop.

**Hamilton:** Are you optimistic, Robb?

**Robb:** Ish. Ish. Both it's, I think COVID has been fascinating and it took, one of the talks that I gave, I think in 2011 or 12 was that the Reno Risk Assessment program. Low carb paleo diets saved the city like \$22 million with this intervention. We've been largely unable to replicate and scale that. We've had a little bit of buy in at different self insured captives, but it took me nearly a decade to figure out that it was literally a perfect storm for the good why that worked there. There was the City Council, the mayor, the chief of police, the chief of fire significant players and the medical community, we're all 100% on the same page, and we've never found a municipality that's willing to do that again.

**Robb:** It's all this like dick measuring and pissing matches and all the rest of that, have just scuttled this whole thing. So that's been kind of a little bit depressing, but one of the things that I mentioned in that talk was that there's this congressional budget office paper that was published in 2005 that suggested that by 2030, 2035, we're going to be bankrupt in the United States from diabetes related costs.

**Robb:** What's fascinating to me is that COVID just basically pressed an accelerator button on that. I don't know that it really changed anything other than the folks that were already to whatever degree of spectrum, they're metabolically unwell, they've been disproportionately negatively impacted by it and it's had all these knock on consequences in society and the economy and whatnot.

**Robb:** So, you have that as a baseline. Now we have this infectious disease that is exposing the soft underbelly of metabolic disease. Yet metabolic disease is still marching forward, other than the people that just die from infectious complications and all of that the costs grow exponentially. So it's going to be really interesting like the next 20, 25 years will be really interesting to see how exactly all of this plays out it. A fascinating thing is that the developing world, we've had reach outs from too small nations that heard about the Reno Risk Assessment program.

**Robb:** These are places that don't have, their currency is like the global reserve currency status and they can't just kind of print some money here and paper over some stuff there. They're facing these exponentially increasing healthcare costs and they have to get out in front of it. It is a non negotiable topic and it's interesting that to the degree that I've seen some ray of hope, it's actually been coming out of the developing world where these folks are, I think they're losing a lot of their culture due to the damage that globalization and exported food systems have imposed but they're also just seeing no joke exponentially increasing healthcare costs, and they just simply can't bear that burden.

**Robb:** So it may be interesting that the United States may be where some of these ideas were spawned, but it may, in fact, never be the place that they actually take a route and do something.

**Hamilton:** That's really interesting. I had no idea. I've often thought about the Reno work that you were doing and why that hasn't grown more and I think you gave a good explanation for that. Because, as you say, that's something you've been working on for a long time Robb. It seems like half the country could have some kind of interventional program like that by now. That just hasn't happened. I guess this comes back to there's so many vested interests in our current healthcare system and how it functions and I guess, like so many things, it often takes a crisis to change them.

**Hamilton:** I don't know if we're at that inflection point or not, but we seem to be kind of hobbling along. As bad as things are right now in the United States, we seem to be like hobbling along and I really don't know if there'll be significant change to come out of this.

**Robb:** I doubt it, unfortunately. I doubt it, I think that the interesting thing with that is we also seem to have a little bit of a culture of, if somebody does try to save their own neck, then they're somehow at fault for doing that, because not everybody else did it. So that's a whole interesting piece to the story too. So it'll be really interesting again, to kind of see how this stuff develops, but to answer your question, specifically to the degree that I have some optimism, it's actually outside of the United States that there are places that are facing the real economic and cultural burdens of this broken food system.

**Robb:** Because of a variety of issues, they're not so far down that road that they couldn't turn around. They're not as far away from their traditional food systems, although many of these places have all kinds of greed and graft and all the rest of that, but the power is still very much more decentralized in a lot of other places than it is here. So it'll be interesting to see if we get some better buy in elsewhere versus right here at home.

**Hamilton:** I was trying to think of a way that I could bring some positivity to our conversation, Robb. This thing is spiraling down quickly here. No, it was me too. I'm not terribly optimistic about these things, but maybe to think maybe a bit more positively about some of the issues related to the ancestral health movement is that what I do think we have seen is the mainstreaming of certain paleo ideas.

**Robb:** The gut microbiome got on the map due to paleo.

**Hamilton:** We've got microbiome. Absolutely. The other one that comes to mind is circadian rhythm. I remember Paul Jaminet giving a talk, gosh, seven, eight years ago about circadian rhythm and it blew my mind. Temperature, food, light. He went through the whole thing, never heard any of this before. It's only within the past couple years that all of a sudden, circadian rhythm. The temperature makes a difference.

**Hamilton:** So it's remarkable about how, the other example I think of is the awareness of immunogenic foods. That's something I know you talk a lot about, whether it's was it gluten or dairy perhaps for some people. So I think the success, if you will, the success of the Paleo movement was to raise the awareness on many of these important issues that I think have first been confirmed by the conventional medical system in many ways, and also adapted and integrated into conventional medicine. So on that essence in that way, I think there has been a lot of success of many of those ideas becoming more mainstream and man, that's awesome. I think that's really, really important.

**Robb:** To your point, that's a really good thing to point out is just early time restricted eating. Even if we can't people to change what they eat, it really looks like if we can change the timing of it, that might be a huge win and it may not fix everything, but man, it may fix a



whole lot of stuff. That could prove to be a really powerful tool in the toolbox for trying to benefit folks health.

**Hamilton:** I totally agree with you. If we can just like circle back to the beginning just for a second here, Robb, is that one of the things that's so interesting to me is that 100 years ago, people knew this. In the physical culture movement, this guy, Bernard McFadden, who's probably one of the most famous promoters of the physical culture movement. He was active late 19th, early 20th century. He sold a watch that told you when to eat. Like a watch for your wrist and you're supposed to eat at 11 and five.

**Robb:** Oh, wow.

**Hamilton:** That's it. Like this time restricted feeding window and he had a whole thing about, why you should do it and when you should exercise. It lines up so closely with much of what we talked, there was some kooky stuff back then too, but a lot of it lines up really closely with a lot of the science today, which is remarkable.

**Robb:** That stuff doesn't carry caveman baggage. It doesn't encroach into religious ideology. It's a very practical, easily understood thing. It's like, eat now, stop now. Then it is interesting too, that as folks get healthier, and they get a little sense of success, oftentimes the next whistle stop then is a thought towards, well, what if I change what I'm eating in addition to how I'm eating, and that's a non trivial place to head hunt for the next round of people that are going to look get food quality.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, I completely agree for sure.

**Robb:** Awesome. Well, Hamilton, let folks know where they can track you down on the interwebs and I can't thank you enough for all the work that you've done and just being a great friend over the years.

**Hamilton:** Robb, thank you. Thank you. It's great to see you great to talk about these issues. I hope we can connect again in person at some point.

**Robb:** Absolutely.

**Hamilton:** Down the line here for sure. The easiest way for folks to connect with me is I have a professional website, I maintain myself, and that's just [hamiltonstapell.com](http://hamiltonstapell.com). It has all of my research, all of my talks, all my publications, everything you want to know about me, the interviews, media stuff. So all my stuff is all in place if people want to learn more about the ancestral health community or the physical culture movement of 100 years ago. I also write a little on Spain. So if folks are interested in history of Spain, they can learn about Spain as well.

**Robb:** Awesome. Well, Hamilton again, can't wait to see you in real life and thank you again for all the awesome work you're doing.

**Hamilton:** Robb, thank you. Thank you for all your hard work.

**Robb:** Thank you. We'll talk to you soon.

**Hamilton:** Take care.

**Robb:** Good interview with Hamilton. Like folks will probably notice near the end, wouldn't say it got depressing, but it got real. We're facing some really fascinating challenges on our

food systems, our health, social issues. It's interesting. It's interesting when a historian uses their techniques of analyzing the past and then tries to use that for a little bit of forward looking, projection and Hamilton's been spot on with the where he predicted the Paleo Diet concept would go, and he predicted that it would not go mainstream, and it did not and there's a host of reasons for that.

**Robb:** It's not to say that we all need to eat paleo, but there are some arguably non negotiable features of a species appropriate diet, which interestingly, we also talked about this. Just the basic ketogenic diet concept, gets you pretty darn close to that. Then with a little bit of tweaking and fiddling if somebody does better, a little bit higher carb, that's pretty easy to get to, but what's interesting is you're starting that whole discussion from kind of a metabolism perspective, which just cuts out so much of the pushback.

**Robb:** So plenty of pushback that we receive from folks that don't like higher fat diets, but it's interesting like you sidestep a number of concerns. Cavemen died when they were young, evolution doesn't jibe with my religious conceptions, like there's just all these different things that leading with this paleo caveman reenactment story, it creates some immediate pushback and antagonism that doesn't really exist if you lead with Whole30 or a ketogenic diet or things like that.

**Robb:** So, it is fascinating and we talked a good bit about the irony that the most powerful concept in biology is this evolution via natural selection. Theodosius Dobzhansky observed that nothing in biology makes sense except through the light of evolution. So there is some irony that this foundational guiding light is still lost as a North Star within nutritional research and also nutritional recommendations, but I do think that we are finding ways of still arriving at more or less that same location despite not really using the map or the language that best describes it.

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**Robb:** More scratchy throat.

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**Robb:** Bye everybody.

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