



VANI HARI INTERVIEW Food Babe

By Chris Wark

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VANI HARI INTERVIEW

Food Babe

Hey everybody, it's Chris. Got another awesome interview you for you today with Vani Hari. Vani is also known as the Food Babe, and I've followed her for many years. Many of you probably know who she is. I think it's safe to say that Vani has probably made the biggest impact on the food industry of anyone, in the last 10 years. Maybe more. Based on her investigative research in exposing the big food and food companies and restaurants for using some pretty sketchy ingredients in the food that they serve you. So, she's done some really awesome work and I just love what she does. She's written two big books. "The Food Babe Way" was her first book, second book "Feeding You Lies." I actually have that here. This one came out last year? 2018?

Vani Hari: No! This year. 2019.

Chris Wark: 2019! Okay. So, hey Vani.

Vani Hari: Hey Chris. Thanks so much for having me. This is so awesome. I'm just thrilled to be on here with you because you're a crusader, like I am too. And you're not afraid to tell people the truth and what you've uncovered about the cancer industry. So, I love you for that. So, thank you.

Chris Wark: Thank you. Yeah. And I didn't mention this in your intro, but you have certainly been attacked a lot. I've been attacked a lot and you've been attacked a lot. I would say more than me, for sure, just by major media outlets. There's been such a big push back against your message and the information that you're putting out there and sharing with people. And we'll get to that. But again, mutual admiration society going on here because I think we both understand how tough it is to be passionate about something, passionate about health and helping people and making a difference in the world. And we also understand that it's not very fun when people are mean to you on the Internet. And so, yeah, I really just want to commend you for your resilience, and the fact that you stood your ground and didn't cave in and go hide in a hole somewhere, after all the attacks that you've endured. And I know it's made you smarter and stronger and all that too. So, okay, I think that's a good enough intro. So, this is what I want to know. How did a mild mannered bank employee become Superhero Food Babe?

Vani Hari: Mild mannered. I don't if I was always mild mannered.

Chris Wark: Okay, that's a Superbad reference.

Vani Hari: It's funny that you... I was the kid with the name on the board. Right?

Chris Wark: Okay. Troublemaker.

Vani Hari: I was supposed to be paying attention.

Chris Wark: Me Too.

Vani Hari: So, I never wanted to pay attention to the teacher. I didn't want to go to school. I wanted to learn what I wanted to learn. But anyways, that was me as a kid. But so, becoming an activist was completely by accident. It was not on purpose, by any means. And if you were to ask me 15 years ago, would I be in the position that I am right now? I would tell you "no." 10 years ago I would have said "no." Because I couldn't have envisioned this life at all. Like, it's not something I put on a vision board and dreamt about and wrote my daily dreams about. None of that.

This all happened because of just my circumstance, and what happened to me as a child and in my early adulthood. So, when I grew up, I could eat whatever I wanted. No matter what it was, as long as it was cheap and it was food, my parents would buy it for me. Because they came from an Indian culture. They were two immigrants that came to the United States to live here. When my mom married my dad, they had an arranged marriage. My dad had been living here in the United States for just a few years, going to school. And was summoned back by his mother to go back to India to meet a slew of different women, and then decide which one he wanted to marry. And then, they got married like a few days later. And he takes my mother back here on their honeymoon and literally she never goes back to India after that.

Chris Wark: That's so wild. It's just so wild.

Vani Hari: It's so wild. But the first thing he said to her was like, "Hey, if we're going to live like Americans, we're going to eat like Americans. And here's a McDonald's hamburger." And she had never had beef before in her whole life. I mean, because cow is sacred in India. So, they didn't eat any fast food, processed food, anything like American industrialized food whatsoever. They were eating everything fresh from the garden. Sharing a cow between their neighbors to get fresh milk that's unpasteurized and raw. And they'd use it as a condiment. They'd make a little yogurt. They're milling their own flour. I mean, the whole shebang, right? All the vegetables that go into Indian cooking and all the spices that are very medicinal in nature. She was used to that her whole life.

So, coming here to America, it was a big cultural shift definitely, but also from a food perspective as well. But they realize how easy it was and cheap to get food compared to how it was in India. And so they just adopted that philosophy. They're like, "America's so easy. It's so much better." And so, my dad actually ended up getting every single one of my relatives to move here, which is just insane. My entire family line, except

for like one or two random cousins and one aunt. So, it's crazy. They just love America. And America is great.

But what had happened during that time is there was this big push to industrialize food because women started to realize that they had an opportunity to work. And they didn't have to be homemakers. And the processed food industry really fed into that philosophy and marketed towards these women, that things could be fast, easy, and cheap. And that's why the drive-thru started to happen. That's why all of these different processed foods that make cooking, at the end of the day, easier started to develop. Microwave foods. Things like Hamburger Helper, Betty Crocker, Duncan Hines, all these brands that you know and loved probably as a kid, were all developed around that time where it just made people's lives better and faster. And they could have more time.

But what also happened during this time is the industrial age of chemicals. And over the last 50 or so years, we've been a massive experiment on the food that we've been eating. There's been so many chemicals that have been developed for one sole purpose. And that is to improve the bottom line of the food industry – to make processed food last longer on the shelves, to make it perform a certain way, to color it a certain way, to make it look a certain way, to make it addictive. Not really to improve our health. So, none of these chemicals are really there to improve our health.

So, as a result, we've just been so sick, as a nation. And I was sick as a child. I mean, I was on, at one point, 9 prescription drugs, under the age of 20. That's just crazy. Right? That's crazy. And to think about the bill that my parents were paying for that, and the bill of like the insurance and all the things that are involved. I mean, in a lot of my drugs, I remember they weren't patented. So, they hadn't gone through the seven years. So, they, they weren't generic. They were very expensive.

Chris Wark: And what were some of the conditions you had, at that time?

Vani Hari: Well, I had asthma, very severe asthma, to the point where I could be hospitalized if I didn't keep it under control. I had so much inflammation in my body that it was also Eczema showing up. A lot of stomach issues. Then later in my twenties, I started to experience a lot of hardcore stress. So, doctors put me on like... Like I went to my doctor... And these are stories that I really haven't told like in depth, but I think your audience will love this.

Chris Wark: That's right. Chris Beat Cancer exclusive.

Vani Hari: That's right. Yeah. So, I go to my primary care doctor, that I hadn't seen for five or six years. And I went to her and I said, "Hey, I've got this boss. He is so reprehensible. To the point where I can't sleep. I can't eat. I'm so stressed out going to work. I don't know what to do about the situation.

He's verbally abusive. Like all of these things." I just went and said, "The reason why I can't sleep and why I'm anxious is because of this. This boss." This doctor said, "Oh my goodness. Alright, we need to put you on Cymbalta right away. We need to put you on Xanax right away. We need to give you Ambien. Those are the three things that I need to give you."

Chris Wark: All at once??

Vani Hari: All at once. No psychiatric evaluation. This is the first time I'm even telling her about these issues. She could've just told me to quit my job. Right? That would have been the best advice I probably could've gotten. Just like a vote of confidence. Like, "You got this. You'll get another job. No worries." But instead, put me on these three major psychiatric drugs that like are just intense and so hard to break free of, once you start taking those.

And that was one of the defining moments that led me to not only live... Before that, I was on my health journey because I had appendicitis and I landed in the hospital. And I was overweight and very sick and overworked. And that started the health journey. But when that happened with my primary care doctor, that led me to that situation in my life where I had to get out of that job and manage these symptoms and be put on these crazy prescription drugs and then get off of them. That is what really like developed my passion for natural healing and truly organic without chemical living.

Chris Wark: That was like the tipping point. And let me throw this in there too. So, my wife had a very similar story, not that extreme. But when we were in college and we were dating, she went to her gynecologist and just kind of off-handedly mentioned that her cycles were unpleasant or whatever. And her gynecologist put her on Prozac. It was like, what? For what? They're putting you on a psychiatric drug because your menstrual cycles aren't great? I mean, she got off of it after a few years, but it was really tough to get off.

Vani Hari: It's very tough.

Chris Wark: Really tough. Yeah.

Vani Hari: What was so scary is that for someone like me who had, I don't know, I just felt like I had a gift in terms of figuring out that this wasn't right. But there's so many people out there that don't know that that's not right for them, and there's a better way. And from being a kid, having all these extreme issues and being on these prescription drugs. And then, going through that appendicitis episode, then going through this. I mean, it was just in and out of doctor's offices, in and out of the medical system, on prescription drugs, not feeling great about myself. I just knew that there was a different way intuitively. And I figured that out, thankfully, with the help of some amazing healthcare providers that

believed in western medicine, but also eastern medicine, and worked with me to educate me on different things.

And then, I had an amazing opportunity to work in Detroit, Michigan for almost three years, to work in this corporate environment. And it was cool because I got to leave Charlotte – where I lived in North Carolina. Where we didn't have Whole Foods. We didn't have a lot of natural health stores. To now this like Mecca... I don't know if anyone knows this, but Detroit, like their farmer's market, everything is just like incredible. And they have all of these really cool little organic hotspots there.

Chris Wark: I didn't know that. That's a surprise. I mean, Joel Kahn's there and he's got....

Vani Hari: My friend Dr. Joel Kahn actually has a restaurant there. But anyways, one of my favorite restaurants in the world, In Season, is there. But I was looking for these oases in this like desert environment of a corporate world, where everybody is eating Subway. Because I was on this journey. And I found that there was just this whole community of healthy people who are living vibrantly. And they had really said "no" to the traditional medical system and were looking at ways to heal their bodies naturally. And I was just learning from them.

I would go to work, and I would work like 60 hours a week. And then at night, I was alone. I was away from my husband. I didn't have a ton of friends. I had some work friends that would go with me to different restaurants. But I would hang out at all these organic places and meet all these people and learn all this stuff. And I just became really super passionate about learning about what I was eating that was making me feel this way and feel awful. And realizing that there was a different way. And I started to make so many shifts in my life that my whole appearance started to change. And people around me started to ask like, "Hey, what are you doing? We want to know what's in this green drink that you're drinking. Why are you taking your cooler on the airplane, full of food? What are all these things?"

And I had an intervention between some friends and they said, "Bonnie, we want you to join Facebook." And I said to them, "I don't know if I want to join Facebook." I was really into politics back then. And I said, "I may want to run for office one day. I don't want all my personal stuff out there." And they said, "Well, we want you to see your wedding pictures and everything else. And this is how we share information now." And this is eight years ago. I didn't join Facebook until 2011. So, eight years ago. And I said, "Okay, I guess I'll join it."

And then, I realized that, "Oh, well maybe I should start a blog and share all this stuff on a blog. That way it's all categorized, and it's not just on this random Facebook page." And so, I started it. I wanted to call it EatHealthyLiveForever.com. And my husband, who's the techie in the

family, said that was a stupid name. And he yelled out from the other room, "Hey, how about food babe?" And I said, "What? Food babe? I'm not a food babe. Well, maybe we can like call it food babe, and it's where we teach people how to become food babes." And so, for the first year and a half of the blog, I never even had my photo on the front header. I had these three cartoon characters. And I just signed every blog post "Food Babe" because I didn't want to use my real name. Because I was still working in this corporate environment working for C-level executives.

But I found myself being at work, as I started writing and building this community online, and these people who thought just like I did... Like they thought things were healthy, that weren't. And when I'd share my experience or share ways that I had been duped by the food industry, other people were like, "Hey, I can't believe it. I've been eating this. I thought it was healthy too. I can't believe it. Thank you so much for sharing this information." And when I realized that I could change companies, that's when things started to take a big shift. And the first company that I was able to change just by writing about it, was an organic yogurt chain that was promoting the word "organic" all over their yogurt, but then putting artificial food dyes and other additives, like trans fats in their yogurt. And I investigated them, expose them on the blog, people shared that post so virally that the CEO apologized, wrote a letter to me, and then took down marketing. So, that was like my first inclination that I could change the food industry.

Chris Wark: Yeah, that's a pretty big win.

Vani Hari: Yeah, it's huge. And I was like, "Well, if I can do this to this little yogurt chain, why not talk about the biggest food companies in the world?"

Chris Wark: Why not Kraft?

Vani Hari: Yeah. Why not Kraft and General Mills and Starbucks and Subway? And so I did.

Chris Wark: Can you run through some of those things? Like some of the highlights? Because I know there are long stories in each one probably, that you could spend an hour talking about.

Vani Hari: There are so many stories in each one. But some of the things that we've been able to accomplish, which is just so cool, is we've been able to get Kraft to remove artificial food dyes from mac and cheese and from a lot of their different products. General Mills has committed to removing artificial food dyes from their cereals. However, they go back and forth on their commitment. They said they were taking it out of Trix, but then they said they couldn't figure out how to take it out of Trix. I mean, come on people.

Chris Wark: "Don't you be messing with my Trix."

Vani Hari: I mean, it's ridiculous. The number one consumer of Trix is children. And if children are eating these foods that create hyperactivity, that's a problem for me. And that's the risk that you take when you have artificial food dyes. And so, that's why it was important for me to highlight the issue, so that parents could become aware that they could change their children's behavior, their skin issues, their allergies by just removing artificial food dyes. So, yes, I wanted Kraft to change when I started that campaign, and General Mills and others. But the real reason I started the campaign was to create awareness about the issue.

And that goes for another issue. And this is a systematic issue, and there's a whole chapter dedicated to this issue in "Feeding You Lies" about how our own US companies – the General Mills of the world, the Krafts, the PepsiCos, the Coca-Colas – they will reformulate their products with safer, better ingredients overseas, but then serve us the more toxic chemicals here in the United States.

Chris Wark: Yeah, it's like Mexican coke, right? They use real sugar in Mexico. And corn syrup in the US.

Vani Hari: Yeah, it's just like that. Same with like Heinz ketchup. Heinz ketchup in Europe has no high fructose corn syrup. Here in the United States, high fructose corn syrup, and added flavors and other additives. In the UK, they use three basic ingredients to make french fries at McDonald's. Over 19 here. One of them includes dimethylpolysiloxane. So, you probably don't know what this chemical is...

Chris Wark: We all know what that is.

Vani Hari: Dimethylpolysiloxane is a chemical that the FDA says can be preserved with formaldehyde, which is a neurotoxin.

Chris Wark: And cancer causer.

Vani Hari: Right. And it is added as an anti-foaming agent to fried foods. It is not a necessary ingredient. What it does is it prevents that caking of like bubbling moisture on a fried food. It's an appearance thing after they take it out on the fryer. And so, these chemicals are not necessary to make these foods. But the food industry uses it to try to sell more product or gain more profit. And they're being unethical because they know their products cause harm using these chemicals. And instead of doing the right thing, which is to formulate their products all the same across the board for all countries, they use the regulations of that country to their advantage, which is capitalism. And because of our lack of regulation here in the United States, and the fact that our FDA is asleep at the wheel, we don't have strong regulations when it comes to food. And they're allowed to get away with murder.

Chris Wark: And also, a part of it too is the fact that the lobbying system here is different than other countries. And that the food industry can lobby congress and influence the FDA in ways that other countries would be like, "Wow, I can't believe you let them do this."

Vani Hari: That's right. So, in my book "Feeding You Lies," we actually go through the systematic issues that are wrong with the way that the food industry has been able to manipulate data and how it gets to the public. They use so many secretive tactics that the blind eye can't see unless you start to really investigate what you're reading out there. So, for example, they'll use paid for spokespeople that look independent, that look reputable. They look like university professors that just want to be academic and teach the public. But they're really being paid by the chemical and food industry to be a mouthpiece for them. And so, when you see something online that goes against your common sense....

Like for example, recently there was just this huge article that came out and it was in every newspaper. "Coconut oil is bad for you and it's never been good for you." And when you looked deep into who was sponsoring the study, it was the American Heart Association that had two people on this study that were being paid by the corn and canola industry. And they want you to continue using corn and canola oils that are very inflammatory to the body. Coconut oil has gotten very popular because people realize it's a healthier, more natural oil. It hasn't been doused with hexane through processing, like some of these other oils. Hexane is also a neurotoxin.

Chris Wark: And it's not from a genetically modified crop.

Vani Hari: Yeah, that's right. And so, yeah, you have these situations where the food industry is manipulating data in the public and the media. And I take the reader through all the different ways you can get duped by the food industry. So, the first book, "The Food Babe Way," was all about ingredients. The second book is all about the tactics and manipulations behind the scenes. How they get you to believe a certain way or how they even get us to like eat fat free for so long, and then realize that they were really just adding more sugar to these products and making us even more sick.

Chris Wark: What are some of the most surprising, alarming, shocking, food additive discoveries that you've made? Are there one or two that when you learned about them, you were like, "I cannot believe this is in food!" I mean, I know there's a lot...

Vani Hari: I think the most ones are the ones that are just so stupid that I just can't even believe the food industries are doing them. And I'll give you one example. Starbucks. For the longest time, Starbucks would not tell us what's in their drinks. So, any of the drinks that you would order at Starbucks, they would not give you the ingredient list. And that is a huge

red flag for me, when somebody won't give you the ingredient list. Because you're like, "What are in these coffee drinks that you want to hide," first of all. "And why do your competitors, like Dunkin' Donuts and others, post all their ingredients online for people to see? And you're like a premium brand."

And it wasn't until I convinced a barista to show me the different packages of ingredients that they were using to make the different drinks, that I was able to discover what was actually in like one of their famous drinks called the pumpkin spice latte. And what I discovered is that they were adding caramel color level four, which is an ammonia based caramel color, not something you get naturally. This is made in a laboratory. And then, when they tested it on rats, it causes cancer. And they were adding this to an already brown drink in an opaque cup! You can't even see it! And if you open it up, the top is the whipped cream that you see. You don't even see the color.

So, it's just that kind of stuff that drives me crazy about the food industry. They put all these additives and colors and everything in these foods that are completely unnecessary. And even to the average Joe, it wouldn't even matter. Like the same reason why the Advil pill is blue. It doesn't need to be blue. You don't need to put blue dye in that Advil pill. And that's one of the reasons I started my company, Truveni. We create a line of supplements that we use the least necessary ingredients as possible to make the supplement. A lot of the supplements use a lot of inactive ingredients that are very actually active in your body. Tons of additives and coatings and sealants. And like soft gels have carrageenan in them, which also disrupts the gut.

Chris Wark: Not to mention fillers.

Vani Hari: Yeah, a bunch of different fillers, things that just aren't necessary. So, we figured out a way to make supplements with the least amount of ingredients, including protein powders and collagen, that don't have any of the fillers in it. And we leave it out. And yeah, maybe our product's not going to look as pretty, when you're trying to show a blue Advil pill. But I know that it's nourishing the body to the highest extent, and there's no reason to use those additional added industrial chemicals. So, that's one example of me just being floored at just the stupidity of an ingredient list on a product that just isn't necessary.

Chris Wark: That is funny. Yeah. Because you're like, it's already brown. Brown. How much more brown does it need to be? And how did Starbucks respond?

Vani Hari: So, my campaign went viral after I released the ingredients in the pumpkin spice latte on my blog. It's the first time in history anyone knew what was actually in it. And it went so viral, I didn't even have to start a petition or anything. Every news station called me. It was all over the news. I went to New York to be on all the morning shows. And they sent

a letter, maybe a month later, saying that they were going to change the formula and ingredients. So, yeah, they changed it and they took out the caramel color.

Chris Wark: Have they started disclosing ingredients since then?

Vani Hari: Yes. And they posted all ingredients online, which was my whole point to that campaign. Like there is no way I'm going to go have a pumpkin spice latte. But for the people that are having them, I think it's important to have it without caramel coloring, and all their drinks without caramel coloring. So, they removed caramel coloring from, I think, every single one of their drinks, which is great. But now you can go online and actually see what you're consuming. And that's been my biggest fight. For transparency. So that we know what we're actually eating and drinking.

One of the other campaigns that I had was to actually ask the two biggest beer manufacturers in the world, Anheuser-Busch and Miller Coors, to release their ingredients. We had the same situation with that is that. Like I could go in my fridge and I'd know every single thing that I was buying and eating and all the ingredients. But when I looked at like my husband's Newcastle Beer, I had no idea what was in it. And knowing what I know about the food industry, I knew that they were like effing with beer. They were totally effing with beer and wine and everything else. And a lot of people don't know that alcohol in this country is regulated by the Treasury Department, not the FDA.

Chris Wark: Yeah, it makes total sense. Of course it is.

Vani Hari: It's because of like archaic rules. So, they get away with just whatever they want. It's really sad. So, there's no one requiring them to release ingredients. But I think it's our right to know what we're consuming.

Chris Wark: Let me just interject to say that the same applies to wine. Most people probably haven't noticed, but one labels do not disclose. And you assume like, "What's in there? Oh, it's just grapes." Right? "It's just some grape juice. They fermented it, and now it's wine."

Vani Hari: They're putting so many additives in food to create addiction and to turn on those brain receptors for you to remember a flavor and want to crave it. That I knew that they were putting those same ingredients in beer and wine, which alcohol already is addictive in its own sense. But then adding those additional flavors and other components really upset me.

And so, one of the things that I actually found through my campaign is that New Castle beer that was in my fridge, they were adding caramel coloring to it, to make that brown color. Not the natural fermentation process creating that. And so, they actually ended up removing the caramel color because of that. And it was really cool. They sent me a

personal letter and said, "We know this is your husband's favorite beer and we removed it. We just want to let you know."

Chris Wark: Well that was really nice. But did it change the color of the beer?

Vani Hari: No, not much, I don't think. I mean, it doesn't look like it. Now my husband has way better brands that he drinks. I hate beer. So, I don't know anything about beer. All I know is what's in beer. And the things that I found out through that campaign really were alarming to me. Corn syrup being added to beer, all sorts of things. But that was a really fun campaign because I had been working on that for almost a year, trying to get them to disclose what was in their beer, just to tell the public. And they wouldn't tell me. So, I was like, "Alright, we've got to start a petition."

So, I pitted them against each other. "Miller Coors, Anheuser-Busch, post your ingredients." And of course, because of the competition between the two brands, Anheuser-Busch was like, "We're going to do it." So, within 24 hours they contacted me, and they said, "Hey, we're going to release the ingredients. We actually want you to see how our beer is made. And we're going to invite you to St. Louis and we want to show you everything and be really 100% transparent," which was really cool. They were very, very hospitable.

Chris Wark: "Come to St. Louis. We want to get you real drunk so you'll be friends with us and never say anything mean again."

Vani Hari: Yeah. But it was funny because that was in 2015. And in 2015, I told them, "You need to create an organic beer, like a non-GMO organic beer. It'll be huge. People would really, really like this. I don't drink beer. I wouldn't drink it. But I know other people would." And every conversation we had, I kept mentioning that. And they kept telling me, "No, we tried it." They showed the bottle to me in their archives and the history section of their bottling factory.

Chris Wark: The museum.

Vani Hari: And they were like, "No. Sorry. We tried that. It just didn't go well over." I was like, "Well, when was that?" And they were like, "It was like seven years ago or whatever." And I was like, "Yeah, times are different now. People are aware. People want to know what they're drinking. They want to know it's the best ingredients." And then, this year in the Super Bowl, they were literally spending millions and millions of dollars to promote an organic Michelob ultra-product. And tout the fact that they don't use corn syrup in their beer. And saying that they were going to be the first to actually label the boxes with the ingredients. Which is way awesome that they're doing it on their own without any regulation. And that's because of consumer pressure. It's never been for any other reason. They

didn't have to do it. It was because the campaign opened up this awareness of like, "Yeah, why are they getting away with this?"

Chris Wark: That's really great that they were so quick to change. Obviously I'm not endorsing beer either. But I mean, it's amazing how much influence you have. You know what I mean? It's just really so cool that you've been able to bend the industry toward being more consumer friendly and transparent.

Vani Hari: But it's not my influence. I have an insatiable curiosity, to the point where I will stop at nothing to get the truth about things. And I think that's one component. But I think the biggest component is the community online. Like the people out there that not only care about what they're drinking, they care enough to educate their friends and share this information on social media and on Facebook and Instagram and Twitter and Pinterest and wherever they are. They're willing to say, "Hey guys, here's this graphic of what's in Chick-fil-a. Food Babe created it. I want to share it with you." Yeah, I might've put it together, but it's all these millions of people sharing this information. Without them, without social media, without the community out there, none of this would even be possible.

Like I'm just so grateful for the Internet and social media, because we've created this change within the food industry because we came together as a group. It's grassroots. This is government regulation, this is every day moms and dads sharing this information, signing petitions. And yeah, I'm the one going to Chicago to deliver those petitions or wherever. But I am so thankful for people like you, Chris, that have a community of people who are knowledgeable about what's going on and trying to understand the madness that we live in, so that we can make a better world.

Because we've been in the dark ages, I feel like, with our health and food industries, for a really long time, about how they operate, what they're willing to do to continue to make money at our demise. And we have an obligation to get this truth out there. And the people who are brave enough to share this with their friends and family are the ones that are real heroes, I think, because they have a lot at stake, in terms of going up against the grain. It's not easy being the person that tells the rest of your family, "Hey, we're not going to eat at McDonald's anymore," when they've been eating at McDonald's for so long.

So, I was in Target. I was coming back from a dentist appointment and I was in Target. And I don't go to Target often, but when I do, I usually end up running into someone who reads the blog, which is really fun. But I'm always like rushing in and out, and I'm like pushing my cart through the checkout. And I almost run this lady over. I felt so bad. I was like, "I'm so sorry I'm not even paying attention." And she looks up and she goes, "Oh, I love you. Oh my goodness. I share everything that you write. Oh

my goodness." She points to her three kids that are like hanging all off the cart. And she goes, "If I told them who you were right now, they'd freak out." And they're probably like 8, 9, and 11, or something like that. And I kind of smile at her, and she goes, "Hey kids, that's the Food Babe." And they all look over Their eyes get so big and they're like, "Ughhhh, YOU'RE the Food Babe." And they start pulling stuff out of their bags that the lady had already put in the little bags to take home, and start saying, "Is this Food Babe approved? Is this Food Babe approved?"

It was just so funny. But it made me laugh so hard because it's not only the person that shares your information that gets touched. If they're the people buying the food right at the grocery store or target or wherever, the impact is times four times five, depending on how big your family is. And it's just so incredible to see the impact that just touching one person can have – on a family or on their buying habits or the way they think about ingredients and food. And they think twice before they eat it.

Chris Wark: Which one of your campaigns are you the most proud of?

Vani Hari: So many people ask me this question and there've been so many positive things that have happened. It wasn't a campaign, but it actually has to do with my brother. My brother, who's seven years older, who as an older brother thinks he knows everything – which he does know a lot and he's taught me a lot and I've always looked up to him. But he had a very unhealthy way of life. And I tried tremendously throughout the years to try to change his eating habits, everything from going into his pantry and being that person, to annoying the crap out of him and his family. And eventually, I think becoming the Food Babe and getting the recognition that I have, convinced him to give it a try. And he has made so many tremendous improvements in his life. And he seems so much happier and vibrant. And that is my biggest accomplishment. And I didn't even do it. It was him that made the decision to do it. But just being able to know that I inspired that is awesome.

Chris Wark: I love that. Sometimes the people that you want to help the most are the people that are the hardest to help.

Vani Hari: Yeah, my dad. Yeah.

Chris Wark: Or are the people that you just can't help. I'm contacted all the time by people who are like, "My brother is sick. My brother, my sister, my mom, my kids have cancer. And I'm trying to help them understand that they can help themselves, and the power of nutrition. What should I do?" And my answer to them is what I just told you. I'm like, "I don't know what to tell you, because sometimes the people you want to help the most are people you can't help. They're not open." I learned that lesson the hard way early on. I've even got somebody very close to me right now that's struggling with some health issues that's absolutely impossible to help,

like cannot be helped, refuses help. And so, it's so sweet that someone that you cared about so much, like your brother, that you've able to see him be affected, impacted by what you do. I mean, that's like the best feeling ever, I'm sure.

Vani Hari: Yeah. It's the best.

Chris Wark: So, tell the subway story. Because I know that one got huge attention. The Yoga Mat Subway story.

Vani Hari: Yeah. So, I used to sit next to this guy, Wes, at work, in my cubicle, when I was in the corporate world. And he would eat Subway every day for lunch. And at that point in time, I had stopped eating just any kind of processed, fast food. But I didn't really know what was in it. But he inspired me to find out what was in it because I kept telling him it was garbage. "It's not good for you. Why are you eating that crap?" But I didn't have any data to share with him. So, I decided to investigate it and actually break down the ingredients in Subway sandwiches. And there was a chemical that I found that... Well, first of all, what I found is that it's not "eating fresh."

Chris Wark: *(Sarcastically)* It's not?

Vani Hari: There's so many preservatives and additives added to Subway, that it just made my mind explode. So many ingredients, right?

Chris Wark: Jared!!

Vani Hari: The fresh bread that they make right there, it's like 30 ingredients (or something ridiculous) at the time. But one of the chemicals that they were using was called azodicarbonamide. And this chemical, I researched, is a chemical that they use in rubber and yoga mats. And it's a chemical that's banned in Europe, Australia, Asia. And if you actually get caught using it in Singapore, you get fined \$450,000 and get put in jail because it's that toxic.

Chris Wark: That's serious.

Vani Hari: That's not something you want to be baking with. And I found out that Subway wasn't using this chemical in other countries because of these regulations. So, they were making their bread the same way, tastes the same, look the same, feels the same in other countries, but using this very toxic chemical here in the United States.

Chris Wark: What does this additive do?

Vani Hari: So, you know how you turn a yoga mat sideways and you can see little air bubbles in there, and they're kind of evenly dispersed? It does the same thing to bread. So, when you make bread at home, sometimes you

get those big air pockets, if you bake it fresh and just put in simple ingredients. But they wanted it to be very uniform, so that it would have evenly dispersed air bubbles, so that it would have the same look and feel every single time you went and ate at Subway. And, I mean, this is one of the reasons why they create addiction to the product, because you know what you're going to get every single time. And you know what to expect. And it's like consumer buying habits.

So, I decided to reach out to them and ask them why they were using it here in the United States versus other countries. I wrote an article exposing, "Is Subway actually real?" And it wasn't. I did all of these things. I even filmed myself eating a yoga mat in this video to just make a point. And they just wouldn't do anything about it. So, finally, one day Michelle Obama was on TV endorsing Subway for children. And they created a big partnership with her "let's move" campaign. And she was saying, "I feel good about giving Subway to children across America," and all of these things. And I was just like... I love Michelle Obama. Like that woman changed my life. She actually convinced me not to go to law school. I campaigned for Obama and Michelle Obama, both election cycles. And it floored me.

And I was like, "She obviously doesn't know what's in this bread. She would not be on television right now promoting this." So I said, "Okay, we need to do something about this, now that Subway is partnering with the government for children." And so, I started a campaign, a petition to get Subway to remove this chemical. And that week, they decided to do it, after the petition went absolutely viral. It was worldwide coverage. I was getting interviewed in like every language. It was crazy. I wasn't speaking every language, but they were translating it all over the world. It was nuts. And I was on Good Morning America, every station across the globe. It was crazy. It went so viral and they ended up changing the bread. But the best thing that happened is azodicarbonamide, you will not find it in America any longer.

Chris Wark: Wow.

Vani Hari: It is very hard to find it. I would say 99% of the bread manufacturers in America have removed it from their bread because of that campaign. So, that's been really exciting to see. Also, Subway took it a step further and it removed all artificial ingredients from their products. And they also made a commitment, which was another campaign I made several months later, to get them to go antibiotic-free with their meats. So, that was really cool. So, we've made some major headway at Subway. And most people don't realize that Subway had, at one point, more stores than McDonald's across the globe. So, they were the number one fast food. So, huge change for so many people, and such a fun way to talk about it by saying, "Who wants to eat yoga mats?"

Chris Wark: Yeah. Was that the most media attention you've got? The Subway deal?

Vani Hari: Yeah. That was really insane.

Chris Wark: And you had a similar impact on Chipotle too, with the antibiotic-free meat, right?

Vani Hari: Yeah. So, Chipotle was similar, and the same thing with Starbucks (the story that I told earlier). They had this tagline that said, "Eat with integrity," but they wouldn't tell you what was actually in their food. When you went and called or wrote to the headquarters and asked them, "What's in a burrito? What's in your tortillas?" they wouldn't tell you. And that really angered me. And so, I convinced again an employee at one of the local chains of Chipotle to show me the different packages and read out the ingredients to me. And then, I started to divulge this information on the blog. It went viral. A couple people started a petition. We petitioned Chipotle to release their ingredients. I got a phone call from Chris Arnold who he still works there, communications director, really nice guy. He called me and said, "Hey Vani, we want to post all the ingredients. We're going to do it. But we need to clean them up too." So, they cleaned them up. They were the first chain to go GMO-free, which was really incredible. Besides their drinks, just to be 100% still on them. They still serve Coca-Cola. That's GMO. But in terms of their food, I would say that's the cleanest fast food that you can buy that's readily available. I'll go there, I'll feed that to my daughter if we're on a road trip or something.

Chris Wark: Chipotle is also one of my go-to spots if I'm traveling or something. I'll go in and get a veggie burrito bowl. And I'm really glad to know that it's better now than it was when they first started popping up, because I had assumptions about them early on that obviously were not correct. And you helped make that change. So, I'm grateful to you for making Chipotle better

Vani Hari: Thank you. And it was not me. It's all these people.

Chris Wark: I know, I know. It's a joint effort.

Vani Hari: I know. I know the emphasis is on what I'm starting, but there's just this amazing community. I'm so grateful every single day for the people out there that are making these changes, because that's why I do this work. I just don't want people to suffer like I used to. And I want them to know that there's a different way. People always ask, "What's your goal? What do you want to happen? You're not going to eliminate processed foods." Well, certainly not. But if I can just get everyone to eat a little less processed food, I mean even just a little less, it would make such a difference.

Chris Wark: So, that brings me to the last question I want to ask you. I think it's the last one, unless I think of another one. Do you feel like, or have you ever felt like, "What's the point?" And when I say what's the point, I mean

like... Due to your efforts (I know it's been a Food Babe army effort), there are processed foods that are less bad. But they're still pretty bad. Right? They're still pretty lousy. Do you ever think like, "Maybe I should just tell people to never eat processed food again. And just forget about the food industry. And just let them be terrible."

Vani Hari: No. This is a really good question. So, one of my big campaigns was on Chick-Fil-A. And they did something totally different in that I wrote about them and exposed what was in their food. It went viral. They invited me to their headquarters. They started to make some significant impactful changes to their supply chain, as a result of those conversations, which was amazing. They decided to go antibiotic free, which was huge for a chicken chain of that size. Really tremendous impact on the supply chain. And I want to commend them for that. But one thing they never changed about their ingredients was MSG. MSG is like one of the first ingredients in their sandwich. And it's something that creates addicted behavior in people. That's why my mouth still waters when I think of one of their sandwiches.

And I did an update article on this recently on my blog, and showed the 50 or so ingredients in their sandwich today, so people would know. And people are like, "Why don't you start a campaign to get them to remove these bad ingredient?" And it's like, I'm kind of over that. I would rather people share what's in their food and what these chemicals do to the body, so that they understand why they shouldn't eat it. Versus getting them to remove it, at this point. Because I think it's more important, the awareness of what's actually in it. But I do have a campaign that I am working on that has made me really crazy and really mad. And it's going to be coming out soon.

Chris Wark: Good. Well, if this is available, we'll link to it in the show notes, and then y'all can go join the effort. If it's not out yet, then you'll need to just go follow Vani at Food Babe on whatever social media you want. And you'll find out soon enough what she's talking about. I'm going to find out when the interview's over. So, I will know. Because I can't wait to know. But anyway, Vani, I want to be respectful of your time. Thank you so much. It's been so fun. I hope we can do this again because I know there's a lot more we can talk about. And I want to make sure everybody knows that your new book, "Feeding You Lies," is fascinating. Your head might explode, but in a good way. But if you really want to understand how subversive, how manipulative, how dishonest, how greedy the food industry is, you will learn it in this book. And you'll look at fast food and junk food and processed food and packaged food in a clearly different way. And I think that's important. Vani and I both agree, we're both proponents of eating whole foods, real food, and staying away from this kind of food. And if you eat it, it should be a special occasion only. Not a daily staple. So, I think that's a good place to close.

Vani Hari: Thank you so much, Chris.

Chris Wark: Thank you, Vani. It's been super fun. Bye everybody. Please share this with people that you care about. They need to know. Vani's got a great message, big heart, done a lot of good in the world, and has got a lot more good in store, I'm sure. Help us reach more people. Thanks for watching. Bye.

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