

Ralph Nader Radio Hour

Episode #530

“Life or Death Foods”

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Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan, along with my co-host, Hannah Feldman. Hello, Hannah.

Hannah Feldman: Hello, Steve.

Steve Skrovan: And the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello, everybody. Oh, this book you're going to use immediately, by Jean Carper.

Steve Skrovan: Yes. Today we welcome back medical journalist Jean Carper, who has written extensively on health and nutrition.

We're going to talk about her latest book, *100 LIFE OR DEATH FOODS: A Scientific Guide to Which Foods Prolong Life or Kill You Prematurely*. She's going to take us through the food alphabet, from bananas to wine. We're going to skip apples. Apples have gotten plenty of media coverage already. So stay tuned to find out what foods Jean Carper recommends to prolong your life.

As always, somewhere along the line, we'll check in with our relentless corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber. But first, let's do a little food shopping with an expert. Hannah?

Hannah Feldman: Jean Carper is a medical journalist and wrote “EatSmart,” a popular weekly column on nutrition every week for *USA Weekend Magazine* from 1994 until 2008. She's still a contributing editor, writing health and nutrition articles. Ms. Carper is also a former CNN medical correspondent and director of the documentary *Monster in the Mind*. She's the bestselling author of 25 books, mostly on nutrition and health. Her latest book is *100 LIFE OR DEATH FOODS: A Scientific Guide to Which Foods Prolong Life or Kill You Prematurely*.

Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Jean Carper.

Jean Carper: Thank you.

Ralph Nader: Welcome indeed, Jean. Listeners should know that Jean Carper has always been ahead of her time. She wrote a book many years ago called *The Food Pharmacy*, which some food scientists scowled at because it wasn't based on double-blind scientific studies. Of course, there

weren't any in those days, and now there are a lot of studies and they're all cited to back up her short chapter-by-chapter commentary on the kinds of food that will prolong your life and the kinds of food that would shorten your life.

Jean, let me ask the first question here, because when you go into one category of foods after another, that we're going to do in a minute, people are going to say, well, is that just her hunch? Is that just common sense? Or is it based in science? So on what did you base your points when you talk about eggplant and berries and beans and legumes and cabbage and caffeine and calories, etc.? What did you base all this on?

Jean Carper: Well, I wish you could see a number of file cabinets that I have here in which I had all of these studies.

What I do generally is go online, look for all the studies that I can find. I do a lot of research at the National Library of Medicine, where they have everything online these days. I had at least five full floors of scientific articles, mostly by leading university scientists. Those are the places where they've been doing the most research on this subject.

The reason I did the book was that I knew there was no other book like this. Nobody has taken a scientific look at all the studies that are being done on specific foods with conclusion as to how they are going to affect longevity. It is a totally new field. It really only had started several years ago when scientists were getting interested in this.

And I thought of all the things that would be the most interesting about a food and whether or not you wanted to eat it would be, oh, how long does it prolong my life, or on the other hand, is it likely to shorten my life? That was the question that I asked of all the foods that I put in the book and I could find substantial scientific studies on.

Ralph Nader: The interesting thing, listeners, is this book affects you all. We've often said with authors, you better listen. The military budget draining the public budgets affects you as taxpayers. A lot of people aren't taxpayers. This one affects all eaters.

As Jean says in her introduction, "I have distilled this latest research to create a unique, up-to-date, one-step guide to more than 100 common foods, beverages and popular diets, revealing whether they prolong health and life or accelerate aging and death." This is in her new book, *100 LIFE OR DEATH FOODS: A Scientific Guide to Foods That Prolong Life or Kill You Prematurely*. She has been a *New York Times* bestselling author with her other books as well.

We're not going to be able to go through all 100, but we're going to go through several dozen, because Jean speaks very concisely and we want to whet your appetite for this book. I'm pleased to say this is the first interview over the media on Jean Carper's new book.

Let's start with the first entry. You have them all by alphabetical sequence. Let's start with bananas.

Jean Carper: The fact of the matter is that bananas, surprisingly, and I did not ever know this before I started doing this research, bananas have a reputation of being very anti-cancerous. Bananas are also the most popular fruit in the entire world.

It wasn't until 2022 that international scientists really discovered how incredibly strong anti-cancer bananas are, because they have something in them called resistant starch. And when they are broken down, you eat a daily dose of resistant starch in slightly green bananas. There's more of the anti-cancer activity in slightly green bananas than in totally ripe bananas.

Ralph Nader: Let's go to beans and legumes.

Jean Carper: If there is anything in the world that people should be eating to try to live longer, it's beans, legumes, lentils, peas. And by the way, peanuts are also in that category. What I found, essentially, was that if you eat a half to three-quarters of a cup a day of any of these, you are going to cut your risk of dying of anything by about 16%.

Ralph Nader: Let's go to another category that might upset some people. Beer.

Jean Carper: Beer. I've never liked beer. However, the fact of the matter is that people don't really take beer as seriously as they should. Beer is an alcoholic drink, and many people just throw it down like it's a Coca-Cola or something, but it is not, and studies show that high beer consumption absolutely causes your death rate to soar. It's gone up as high as 24% in premature deaths and is responsible in major cities for high death rates.

Ralph Nader: How about berries?

Jean Carper: Oh, berries are super. If there's anything that everybody should be eating, it's berries. In one of the studies I discovered that blueberries, of all the berries, are the most powerful in keeping you alive longer.

A study was done of 2 million women, and those who ate blueberries, no more than only once a week, reduced their death rate by one-third. Now, that is powerful. And by the way, they reduce strokes by about 37%.

Ralph Nader: When you say that, what does it mean actually to reduce the death rate by a third?

Jean Carper: It means that if you looked at the ordinary death rate, whatever it is, that by eating these foods, you reduce your odds of dying by whatever the percent is. Nobody is going to live forever, so you're going to die sometime. You're just going to die later, at a later age. You're going to live longer. You're going to have a much longer life.

Ralph Nader: You have something called "white bread is death's best friend." Tip Top bread, the early breads that were almost 100% filling the shelves in the supermarket when I was a young person, Tip Top bread and others, my mother would say that you could always see Tip Top bread

by looking the other way, picking it up in the supermarket and having your fingers and thumb collide.

Tell us about white bread and the increasing use of multigrain bread. There's good progress here.

Jean Carper: Yeah. White bread was certainly very popular when I was a child. And it's so amazing to me how recent some of these studies are. They didn't really know all that much about how bread was going to affect your longevity.

But then there was a bunch of Canadian professors in 2021, who did a landmark study on the consumption of bread in 137 individuals in 21 countries. What they found was really appalling. The more white bread you ate, the earlier you were probably going to die. So if you ate seven slices of white bread a day, compared to two slices a day, your death rate would jump up 27%.

We should stop eating any kind of white bread like that and go to the alternative, of course, which is fantastic because you go to whole grains. White bread is made from unrefined grains, and they're so bad. But if you eat whole grain bread, your chances of dying are going to be substantially lower.

One study showed that if they started eating the so-called unrefined grains, that is, whole wheat grains of any kind, the chance of cancer, for example, fatal cancer, fell about 12%. So eat whole grain, everything, and especially whole grain bread.

Ralph Nader: You have something called Blue Zones diet, ideal for centenarians, people who are 100 years old or older. What's that about?

Jean Carper: In the world, there are something called Blue Zones, and the Blue Zone was thought up by an author who went around the world, and he found five longevity hotspots. So he looked at their diets. He found one in Greece, one in Japan, one in Sardinia (Italy), Loma Linda, California, for example, and Costa Rica.

The diet mostly consists of lots of plant food, minimal meat. In other words, the meat in the Blue Zone places is regarded just as a side dish. You would have 3 ounces of fish a week. You could have goat milk. You could have nut snacks. You could have no dairy, but beans every day, natural sugars, sourdough bread. You could have coffee and tea in moderation. And that's a so-called Blue Zone diet that is in certain places, and it has been found to prolong life.

Ralph Nader: Here's an interesting one. One of my relatives has stopped eating breakfast. She heard somebody say it was good just to have one major meal a day. But you have a couple pages saying skipping breakfast brings death sooner.

Jean Carper: That was a real surprise to me, Ralph, on this one, because who would have guessed it? I try to eat a little bit of breakfast, but sometimes I really don't eat enough, or like many others, I skip it.

Texas Tech University researchers looked at, studied and followed 7000 middle-aged Americans for 22 years. And they found that lots of them rarely ate breakfast, a few ate breakfast on some days, and 61% ate breakfast every day. Now, here's what they found. They were so shocked. And I'm going to read you the conclusion.

"Those who rarely ate breakfast were 50% more apt to die of cancer and 69% more apt to die sooner of anything than those who ate breakfast every day." That is a stunning statistic.

Ralph Nader: And you have something surprising. Caffeine, you say, keeps you awake and alive. That's not the general impression that it keeps you alive.

Jean Carper: You're absolutely right about that. That was another big surprise to me. I'm not a really high caffeine consumer. But nevertheless, when I looked at the studies and the statistics, the fact was, well, in the first place, 64% of Americans drink caffeine daily. And the most striking study here was done at the University of California where they found that Americans who consumed a typical one to four cups of caffeinated coffee a day were 10% less likely to die of anything than those who consumed a mere 50 milligrams. So, another big surprise.

Ralph Nader: This next one shouldn't be a surprise, "calorie overloads destroy longevity." Explain.

Jean Carper: Yeah, because for so long we've studied animals, and they've done a lot of studies on reducing calories in lab animals, and lo and behold, they find that in these studies, 30% to 50% of these animals lose weight, and it increases the animal's lifespan by 30% to 50%.

The reasoning is, if it works in animals, shouldn't the same thing work in humans? And sure enough, professors, especially at Washington University, did studies on calorie restriction and longevity, and they showed for sure that restricting calories reduces inflammation, which is a promoter of aging. 15 min/45 sec People who ate lots of calories are supposed to have heart functioning of somebody like 20 years older. And restricting calories is a good way to prolong your life.

You have to be a little careful here. You have to be a little tricky. I wouldn't want anybody to go out and start cutting enough calories that would be harmful to them. And that could happen. So I think that it would be a good idea, if you want to go on a calorie-cutting diet, that you should probably consult a dietician or a doctor or some professional to be sure that you're not really hurting yourself rather than helping yourself.

Ralph Nader: Well, it makes a difference, whether they're empty calories, say, based on sugar, or they're calories fed by nutritional vegetables and fruits. Doesn't it?

Jean Carper: Yes, and of course, they're lower in calories. And then you don't get candy. Candy is very bad. Candy is really high sugar, almost all sugar and, again, a lot of high calories. You're right about that.

Ralph Nader: Well, you're very favorable on carrots and celery. How about cereal?

Jean Carper: Cereals, are not all bad, but they're not all good either. There are a lot of ready-to-eat cold cereals. There have been studies showing that cereals can actually reduce your risk of death. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) did a big study of over 400,000 Americans, and it showed that those who ate the most ready-to-eat cereals, compared to the least, did reduce their death rates. However, when they started looking further, the fact is that when the University of Toronto researchers looked at it, they said it doesn't work unless the cereal is not refined. All the cereals must be whole grain in order to help you prolong life.

One of the studies showed that refined cereals, when the grain is demolished, actually raised death rates by 27%. But when they gave them whole grains, then their death risk was substantially reduced. So eat whole grain cereals.

I was in the supermarket the other day looking at the aisles and aisles of cereal, and it's very depressing, because there are so many that definitely you would not call health foods or life-extending foods. There are a couple of good ones. Fiber One looks very good for cereal, very high in fiber.

And my mother always loved shredded wheat, and we had a lot of shredded wheat as a child, and that still looks pretty good.

Ralph Nader: The corporations who process these cereals have highlighted with huge ads for the kids, cereals with a lot of sugar built right-in, so you don't have to add it. Oatmeal is still right up near the top, I take it?

Jean Carper: Yes. Oatmeal is my primary choice.

Ralph Nader: Another first for Jean Carper is she dedicated her book to her mother, grandmother and great grandmother. I've never seen that before.

Jean Carper: They were three fabulous women, and they had a lot of influence on me when I was younger.

Ralph Nader: For sure. Chocolate, you say, superfood with a dark side. What do you say about that?

Jean Carper: Literally. Chocolate is perplexing, because the studies are kind of all over the place.

There was a recent study, it was actually a 30-year study of 27,000 men, and they ate about a half an ounce a day of chocolate compared to men who were eating none. The ones who ate the chocolate actually did end up living about 12% longer. So there is something, and they know in chocolate, that does extend life.

However, there are also other not-so-good things in chocolate. And cadmium is very high in dark chocolate, so authorities don't recommend eating more than 1 or 2 ounces of dark chocolate a day. And milk chocolate is practically useless.

Ralph Nader: Here's coffee. This is a good one.

Jean Carper: Coffee. I know. Coffee, who would guess? I'm not a big coffee drinker. I maybe drink a cup a day, but here's the first line of my section on coffee. Let me just read it.

"Coffee drinkers have a lower risk of death than non-coffee drinkers, is the firm conclusion of a worldwide Harvard study of nearly 4 million subjects." And they just did study in 2019. This is a very compelling study showing that there is something to coffee.

Here's the good news, though. Even though we drink coffee that has caffeine, the fact of the matter is that researchers think it is the non-caffeine constituents of coffee that really are doing the work of making you live longer. So in the studies, drinking half a cup of coffee cut death odds 5%. Drinking a whole cup decreased odds 9%. And two cups a day sliced the death risk by 18%. Now, after that, drinking more, up to seven and a half cups, did not further increase longevity. So really, you don't have to drink a lot of coffee to try to increase your lifespan.

Ralph Nader: Well, let's go for the tea drinkers. What do you say about tea?

Jean Carper: Tea is also one of those fabulous things that extends your life—brewed tea, green, black, or oolong. When you get to the kind of tea that many people drink, which is instant tea and bottled tea, that's not going to extend your life. They have very few antioxidants in them. So drink the real tea, brew the tea, and that will help you live longer.

Ralph Nader: What about eggplant, one of my favorite foods?

Jean Carper: It is, really?

Ralph Nader: Yes.

Jean Carper: Eggplant? No kidding. Okay.

I didn't realize how ancient eggplant is. And 4000 years ago, in India especially, they used eggplant as a medicine, and they used it to treat diabetes. It has a bunch of recently discovered powers about it that no one realized until now. For example, if you look at 120 vegetables, eggplant was in the top 10 in antioxidant powers. And that's what you want. So I would say eggplant looks pretty good, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: And then you have diet sodas. They kill you too, but faster.

Jean Carper: That was a surprise to me when I found it out. You would think, at least I thought, well, the real thing must not be as good as these new diet drinks. I was totally wrong. They will

kill you three times more quickly than the regular sugar drinks. So don't go for the diet drinks. Those are just about one of the worst things that you could ever drink.

Ralph Nader: For the millions of people who have high blood pressure, what is this DASH diet you have in your book?

Jean Carper: Oh, the DASH diet. Actually, the DASH diet is a very famous diet, and it's a famous blood pressure downer. The DASH diet is called the Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension diet. It's been a famous diet, and it was introduced in 1997. It's been so effective, it's been proven as effective as blood pressure medications. So many people die of high blood pressure. It kills 10 million people a year. In 2023, this DASH diet was voted number one best diet by many researchers.

For the DASH diet you would have to eat every day four to five servings of whole grains, five servings of vegetables, two or three fruits, two low- fat dairy products, three servings of fish, poultry or meat, two or three servings of unsaturated fats and oils. In other words, the DASH diet is very similar to the Mediterranean diet. And it would be a very good idea to follow the DASH diet, especially if you have hypertension.

Ralph Nader: One thing that was interesting to me especially, is your entry on fermented food, like pickles and sauerkraut.

Jean Carper: Yes. Do you ever remember eating those? I grew up next to a pickle factory, of all things, so we had a lot of pickles. But this is fermented food. It was very popular in the ancient days with the Egyptians, Babylonians, Chinese. They preserved foods by fermenting them, and that meant exposing them to live bacteria, so they're not always the most popular foods with everyone.

But the studies show that fermenting promotes longevity and has been shown to help prevent diabetes, gastrointestinal disorders, cardiovascular disease, cancer and obesity. When you think of it, if you look at cabbage, for example, well, when you ferment it, it becomes sauerkraut. And when it becomes sauerkraut, it is said to triple its longevity activity. It's very popular in the Japanese diet, all the fermented foods, and we know that the Japanese longevity is pretty darn good. And of course, yogurt is a fermented food also, and it looks good.

Ralph Nader: I was looking at your entry on fried foods. There is a regional difference in the United States. If you go down south and you go into restaurants, they really highlight fried foods big time—fried chicken, french fries, etc. It's not that they don't highlight up north or west, but I think Southerners eat more fried foods. What have you got to tell them?

Jean Carper: You can tell what I think of fried foods by what I subtitled it (the chapter)—*Everybody's Fatal Attraction*.

Fried foods are so bad for you. The fact is that there was a recent study, 20 years of over 100,000 middle-aged women at the University of Iowa, and they concluded that eating fried foods every

day raised the premature death average. Specifically, eating fried chicken, fried fish, or shellfish boosted death odds 12% to 13%. And a daily dose of fried chicken increases your risk for heart disease by 23%.

So the more daily servings of fried foods women had in one study, the greater their risk of death increased. So fried foods are definitely one of the worst things that you can eat, and deep fried foods are really deadly.

Ralph Nader: Not surprisingly, Jean Carper, you're high on fruits and vegetables. And not surprisingly, you're high on garlic.

Jean Carper: Garlic, oh, my gosh. It's one of the things that I forget to eat a lot. But for longevity, people ought to be eating at least a garlic clove a day. It's very good for you and prolonging life.

Ralph Nader: Does it make a difference whether it's raw or cooked?

Jean Carper: I started to say, I don't think so, but actually, I think it's probably slightly better raw, because so many things are slightly better raw. And my recollection is garlic is good either way, but probably it is slightly better raw.

Ralph Nader: Here's one of my favorites—grapes and raisins. And red grapes are better than green grapes.

Jean Carper: Yeah, because of the color. The intensity of the colors often makes a difference. So the more intense that the skin of a fruit is. And actually, for a lot of fruits, like apples, etc., 50% of the longevity activity is in the skin. So try to eat the skin.

Ralph Nader: Wash the apple very thoroughly, though, as you suggest.

Jean Carper: Yes, absolutely.

Ralph Nader: "Herbs and spices can make nutritious food that isn't that delicious, delicious. People don't make enough of it. People in India make a lot of it." What do you have to say about that in terms of longevity?

Jean Carper: Tiny doses extend your survival, so use herbs and spices. Even if they're in tiny amounts, they are number one on the antioxidant potency, so they are extremely important.

There was a major study by the National Cancer Institute that tracked 50,000 people over 11 years, and they found out that herbs delayed death. If you ate a lot of turmeric, you could expect to see your overall death risk go down maybe as much as 10%, according to these studies by NCI.

They also found that the death odds would drop by eating black pepper, saffron, with the rates of overall death down 15%, and also of heart disease. So even though you're eating a little bit of it, it's worth it. And also cinnamon, which is known for stopping the metastatic spread of cancer, which I didn't know before.

Ralph Nader: You have something on juices. A lot of people think if they drink grapefruit juice, orange juice, prune juice, that it's good for you. But we're not talking about fresh-squeezed in your kitchen. You're talking about buying it in bottles, aren't you, from the supermarket?

Jean Carper: Yes. That was a surprise to me. I was disappointed because it's so easy to drink juices instead of eating the whole fruit. But actually, the first line of my entry among juices is, don't count on food and vegetable juices to help you live longer. It just doesn't happen.

The reason we know that is that there was a huge study done of 40,000 Americans just a couple of years ago, and the ones who said that they drank a daily cup or more of 100% fruit juice, and this was over like a decade, their drinking of the juice was associated with a 30% jump in overall death odds, and a 49% rise in fatal heart disease compared with drinking no juice. Although this figure to me is shocking, it is based on really solid evidence. So don't think that, yes, you're getting by with drinking juice or that juice is any kind of substitute for the whole fruit.

Ralph Nader: You have something that's going to upset some people, on cured meat. Bacon, ham, hot dogs, you call them ferocious carcinogens.

Jean Carper: Ralph, of all the things that I first discovered to be so horrible for you was bacon. I once did an entire article against bacon for a magazine because there is nothing perhaps in the entire world that could be any worse for you than bacon.

Cured meats are absolutely death parcels, and bacon looks to be really, really the worst. The World Health Organization has called them blatant human carcinogens. Eating any of those cured meats, and you're eating more than five strips of bacon a week, that's only 5 ounces, speeds up the arrival of death.

If you eat bacon, you are going to be 8% earlier of dying of both heart disease and cancer, 9% more likely to get Alzheimer's, 12% more likely to die of diabetes, 19% to die of kidney disease, 21% respiratory diseases, and 22% from liver disease. So meat is hazardous on its own. Red meat is especially hazardous.

But when you cure the meat, it doubles its likelihood of killing you. So ordinarily, if you ate three and a half ounces of red meat, your death rate would go up maybe 9%. If the meat is cured with preservative chemicals, its odds of killing you soar to 17%. And for cardiovascular deaths, 19%. And neurodegenerative disease goes up from that to 57%.

The World Health Organization (WHO) bluntly calls this a class 1 carcinogen. And WHO announced, "The existing evidence is sufficient to officially classify cured meat as a human carcinogen." So why are we eating it?

Ralph Nader: Yeah, that's a good question. You're very high on the Mediterranean diet, which doesn't have bacon at all, heavy on vegetables and fruits. It's the core of my mother's recipes that we grew up on, and that I put in a recent book, the *Ralph Nader and Family Cookbook*.

Jean Carper: I love that book.

Ralph Nader: It has an introduction about how mothers and fathers can get their kids not to complain and whine at the dinner table and learn to love nutritious food.

Jean Carper: If I could just say one more thing about the Mediterranean diet, because I don't think generally people know how powerful it is.

There was a study in 2023, where they looked at 700,000 American and European women. And the people who ate a Mediterranean diet, among these women, were 23% less likely to die. Their overall death rates were 23% lower.

The NIH, at that time, tried to get Americans on that diet, and they predicted that if Americans would eat that Mediterranean diet, our death rates would go down about 20% in both men and women.

Ralph Nader: Fortunately, there are a lot of what they call Middle East restaurants spreading all over the country. When we were growing up, they were very rare. So you can have more ready access. Also in supermarkets you can buy hummus and baba ghanoush and other similar cuisines.

You're high on olives, obviously. But you have a little skepticism on onions?

Jean Carper: Well, I don't mean to have. They just weren't looking as potent in preventing death as I remembered. So the current evidence was not as strong as I had hoped.

Yes, it doesn't mean we shouldn't eat them. They're an ancient food. Ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and everyone ate them, and we still eat a lot of onions. Perhaps just to eat it—maybe more recent studies have not been done, but there's no reason not to eat onions. I found absolutely nothing against them, but I didn't find as much for them in extending life as I would have liked to.

Ralph Nader: Jean Carper, obesity is becoming controversial. There's a defend obesity movement in this country, and there's some commercial involvement in the promotion as well. What do you say about obesity here?

Jean Carper: Well, in the stuff that I looked at and the studies that I looked at, staying fat is not a longevity booster. That doesn't mean that if you go out and lose a lot of weight that you're going to live longer.

On the other hand, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently did a study that looked at like 100 studies involving 3 million Americans who were obese. And their likelihood of death was higher than normal by 18%. If you were severely obese, and your body mass, your BMI was over 40, your death risk soared even higher to 29%. So it is a risk of death. Obesity, clearly, is not a healthy condition. One study showed that death odds doubled with severe weight.

You don't want a whole lot of fluctuations, so even though you are likely to die from severe weight loss—you are much more likely to die from gaining weight. So it does not look good.

Ralph Nader: Some people listening would say, I have to eat meat, I have to eat chicken because I need the protein. And you have a section called, "Protein, plant or animal, deadly difference." What's that about?

Jean Carper: Well, that's interesting, because when people talk about protein, they have to have protein, the fact of the matter is that you can get protein a couple of places. You can get protein from a steak or you can get it from a cup of beans. And you would be far better off to get your protein from a cup of beans than from a steak.

I'm looking at a study, a Harvard analysis of the diet records of 130,000 men and women that they studied over 30 years, and what they found especially, was that eating plant protein promotes longevity, but eating meat protein promotes death. So of your choice, if you want to get protein, you would be far better off to get it from plant products than meat products.

Ralph Nader: You're properly condemnatory based on the studies of salt and sodium in the diet, a lot of which comes in the processed foods, but still we have people adding salt from a salt shaker when they sit down to have dinner.

Mike Jacobson, one of the founders of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, has written a book called the *Salt Wars*, (published in 2021) and he estimates hundreds of thousands of people shorten their lives in the United States because of salt alone.

Jean Carper: Yes, I totally, totally agree with that. And the latest studies show it.

There was just a really good study on the *European Heart Journal* in 2022, and nobody will ever forget their message—salt is a mighty killer, and studies show, you will live longer if you ban salt from your table.

If you look at studies from Tulane University, they say that if you are always salting your food, your risk of premature death goes up 28% compared to people who never or rarely add salt. Salt was found to erase well over two years of life expectancy for men and women after middle age. So cut out the salt. There is a direct link between average sodium intake and death rate. No question about it.

Ralph Nader: Your studies show positively for brown rice compared to white rice, for soybeans like tofu and miso, negative on sugary beverages. There's one for you. Fortunately, sugar beverages are declining compared to 20, 30 years ago.

Jean Carper: Boy, I'm glad to hear that. I call sugary beverages killers on the loose.

Ralph Nader: Yes. On the other hand, you're very high on sweet potatoes. Why?

Jean Carper: Because they're real food and they are often a very big part of longevity diets. They're really perfect food for people who want to get to 100 or more. And they're very famous in Okinawa, which has more centenarians than any other place. So if you eat sweet potatoes, it's going to help you. They are a longevity food.

Ralph Nader: Studies you cite are high on the vegetarian diet. They're high on tomatoes, especially cooked tomatoes. High on vinegar. What about ultra-processed foods?

Jean Carper: Oh my, that's one of the worst. If we could get rid of ultra-processed foods, which we're never going to do, we would save so many lives. There are so many studies, which show that ultra-processed foods are real killers. And these are international studies in all countries, especially France and Australia, and really every place.

The worst study I ever saw was one on Brazil that attributed the death of 57,000 citizens, or 10% of the population, to ultra-processed foods. And they said that that was the number that died by eating these ultra-processed foods. So why are we eating them? They are really terrible for you. And the studies are out there. They do kill people.

Ralph Nader: Studies show vinegar extends life by the spoonful. People ought to use more vinegar as a taste enhancer as well, even though if you take it straight, it doesn't seem that way. You're down on the Western diet. This is interesting that less developed countries, with their natural food throughout the history of their cultures, are very often far superior to the so-called corporatized Western diet.

Tell us, how much responsibility do these corporations have? You've written over the years a lot of comments and articles on these corporate molesters of sound nutrition.

Jean Carper: Yeah, it's really sad. Well, that's what it's called, sad. S-A-D is a depression. That's what we get from the Western diet. It's very sickening. It cuts your life short.

Generally the studies show that eating a Western diet can cut your life short by as much as a decade. It's very common because the diet is high fat, high calorie, high meat, high sodium and everything that's bad for you.

The figures are at 11 million premature deaths a year happen to be linked to the Western diet. That is 11 million people who die with some relationship to a Western diet. So if you're eating a Western

diet, my book shows you how to get off the Western diet and onto an optimal diet where you'll live much, much longer.

If you switch even at a late age, if you switch at age, like 60, you can gain eight years. And if you don't switch until 80, you can still live an extra two to four years by ditching the Western diet and going to an optimal diet.

Ralph Nader: Boy, the IRS should like your book, huh? Listeners should know, this is a 200-page book. It's very readable. The print is very readable. It's very concise. It has these scientific studies at the end.

Let's conclude with a skepticism on my part, because I'm not that informed. These studies say 15% increase, 8% increase, 10% decrease in life expectancy. What if you add them all up? What are the amounts? They say 1000% increase or 500% decrease. How does that work?

Jean Carper: I've probably gotten quite used to the way these studies are conducted. There are many really good people doing the studies, and they do want to improve food. But all of the studies are rather done this way. I'm not saying everything is really great.

On the other hand, there are many people out there who don't want to eat this rotten food or this food that's going to kill you. They do want to eat their food, and that was one of the reasons I wanted to do the book, so people would know, at least about the science that I could find in reputable places from reputable people who study this. Yet the fact is that there are certain foods that are more likely to save your life and more likely to kill you. And I wanted people to know the difference.

Ralph Nader: For sure. How do they do these studies? When you say they studied 200,000 people, do they have questionnaires or what?

Jean Carper: A lot of the times they do have questionnaires. Sometimes they just get the people and they'll study them for six months and they'll say, eat this for six months, or eat this for six weeks, or eat this for a year, or do this, so stay off all alcohol, etc. Alcohol just doesn't look good at all. It's really terrible. Seven and a half ounces of wine is no good.

Ralph Nader: How do they take into account what they call bias? In other words, if somebody eats consistently whole grains, they may have other positive lifestyles. How do they take care of that?

Jean Carper: That is a very good, legitimate question, Ralph. And it is true that people who eat some of these things or do some of these things have other habits. Maybe they're nonsmokers, they're whatever. They don't do this or that. It does influence their risk.

So nothing is sure in this, but there's a way that they are trying to isolate certain things, and that's about the best that they can do, but it's not absolutely pure, and there are all these other factors that

may enter in that are not taken into account. It's only a guess, but it's a better guess than we have with the studies than without.

Ralph Nader: Well said. And you're going to get some inquiries from our listeners who are more statistically oriented, and we'd like you to read them and respond to them as only you can. Would that be okay?

Jean Carper: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Ralph Nader: You're going to open up a website. We've got this early interview with you before you have opened up a website. But in the meantime, people can get this book on Amazon and it's in paperback, very easy to read. It could be a raging bestseller. I don't know anybody who cares about nutrition and health who wouldn't want this book, because it would immediately allow them to change their diet without having to wait for some federal regulation. They could, with this information, immediately change their diet and enhance their health, which would presumably mean extend their life expectancy.

Steve and Hannah, you want to get in here?

Steve Skrovan: Jean, I am actually very happy to report I have a pretty good vegetarian, whole grain diet. And I was running the numbers. I'm 67 years old. I'm going to live to 120, I'm very happy to report.

Jean Carper: That's great. Yes.

Steve Skrovan: Yes. I think that'll be a good thing. It may just be depressing. But the food I want to ask you about food, isn't really food. And you may have covered this when you were talking about grapes, but I know wine has been controversial in this arena, and I'm talking about specifically red wine. What is your take on that? And please give me the answer that I'm looking for.

Jean Carper: Well, I'm afraid it's probably not the answer you're looking for. I myself, have thought for a very, very long time, that a little wine was okay. I no longer think that. The fact of the matter is that the studies suggest that any amount of alcohol is not good for you.

Now, if you are drinking wine, there is a limit per day that you should observe, because going past this will put you into a higher risk. Seven and a half ounces of wine a day is probably the absolute maximum that anyone should drink, of any kind.

Ralph Nader: Hannah?

Jean Carper: I occasionally drank wine and I've virtually abandoned it. Now I get a nonalcoholic wine, and I'm just fine with it.

Steve Skrovan: I'm putting a little measuring line on my wine glass at seven and a half ounces. Hannah, what do you have to say?

Hannah Feldman: Well, first, I'd like to say my condolences, Steve. I'm sorry for your loss.

I'm curious about the types of studies that you cite in your book. Are these lab studies? Are these case control studies? Are they meta analyses? What kind of studies are we talking?

Jean Carper: They're all legitimate studies that are published through the National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health. That's where they all come from. They're all there in some form or other, but the studies themselves are of every quality and every type you could think of, so they're all over.

Ralph Nader: They include animal studies, you mean?

Jean Carper: Not very often. Most of the studies are human studies. I think I maybe only quoted one or two animal studies, but the place I get all the studies is where they're all indexed, at the National Institutes of Health at the National Library of Medicine.

So they have to have some reason to be there. And most of them are done by reputable people who are studying this worldwide, a lot of academics. And some of them I recognize from studying all kinds of other stuff, and some I do not. But generally, it would be a higher quality than just going out on the street and yelling to someone.

Ralph Nader: We've been speaking with multi-book author and medical correspondent, Jean Carper, who for many years has been a major educational force on matters of food, health and safety. She's the author of the brand new book, *100 LIFE OR DEATH FOODS: A Scientific Guide to Foods That Prolong Life or Kill You Prematurely*. She's been a *New York Times* bestselling author, and we wish her the best of luck in this first interview of her latest book.

Thank you very much, Jean Carper.

Jean Carper: Thank you.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Jean Carper. We will link to her work at ralphnadaradiohour.com.

Now let's check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

Russell Mokhiber: From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your *Corporate Crime Reporter Morning Minute* for Friday, May 3, 2023. I'm Russell Mokhiber.

The Biden Administration said last week it would again delay a decision on a regulation aiming to ban menthol-flavored cigarettes, citing the historic attention and immense amount of feedback on the controversial proposal by the Food and Drug Administration. "This rule has garnered historic

attention and the public comment period has yielded an immense amount of feedback, including from various elements of the civil rights and criminal justice movement," said Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra. That's according to a report from CBS News.

The White House had already overshot a previous self-imposed date to decide on the regulation by March. The rule had been stalled in an interagency review process. A senior administration official told CBS News they are asking for more time to hear from outside groups, especially on the civil rights side.

For the *Corporate Crime Reporter*, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. I am Steve Skrovan, along with Hannah Feldman and Ralph.

Hannah Feldman: And now here's "In Case You Haven't Heard" with Francesco DeSantis.

Francesco DeSantis: The *American Prospect* is out with a chilling news story on Boeing. This report documents how the late Boeing whistleblower John "Swampy" Barnett, who died under deeply mysterious circumstances during his deposition against the aviation titan last month, was ignored, mocked, and harassed by his corporate overlords.

When he tried to raise the alarm that Boeing's practices could be in violation of Section 38 of the United States Criminal code, "The whole room burst out laughing." When he found planes riddled with defective and nonconforming parts and tried to report it, a supervisor emphatically declared "We're not going to report anything to the FAA."

Yet even more than Boeing's rancid corporate culture, this piece takes aim at corporate criminal law, specifically the Y2K era AIR21 law, which "effectively immunizes airplane manufacturers from suffering any legal repercussions from the testimony of their own workers." Per this law, "the exclusive legal remedy available to aviation industry whistleblowers who suffer retaliation for reporting safety violations, involves filing a complaint within 90 days of the first instance of alleged retaliation, with a secret court administered by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which lacks subpoena power, takes five years or longer to rule in many cases, and rules against whistleblowers an astounding 97% of the time," according to the Government Accountability Project.

No wonder Boeing acts as though they are above the law.

The United Auto Workers Union continues to rack up victories. On Tuesday, *More Perfect Union* reported, quote, "Mercedes-Benz has abruptly replaced its US CEO in an effort to undercut the union drive at Mercedes' plant in Alabama. In a video shown to workers, new CEO, Federico Kochlowski, admits that many of you want change and promised improvements."

As Jonah Furman, Communications Director for UAW, notes, "Mercedes workers have already killed two-tier wages, gotten their UAW pay bump, and fired their boss, and they haven't even voted yet. If that's what you get for just talking union, imagine what you can win when you join the union."

Moreover, UAW President Shawn Fain issued a statement decrying the mass arrests of anti-war protesters, writing, "The UAW will never support the intimidation of those exercising their right to protest, strike, or speak out against injustice. This war is wrong, and this response against students and academic workers, many of them UAW members, is wrong. If you can't take the outcry, stop supporting this war."

This has been Francesco DeSantis with "In Case You Haven't Heard."

Steve Skrovan: I want to thank our guest again, Jean Carper.

For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call "The Wrap Up," featuring Francesco DeSantis with "In Case You Haven't Heard." A transcript of this program will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* Substack site soon after the episode is posted.

Hannah Feldman: Subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* YouTube channel. And for Ralph's weekly column, it's free, go to nader.org. For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to corporatecrimereporter.com.

Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you, everybody. You want to get Jean Carper's book for your nutritional health and extending your life expectancy.