

Caspar ([00:00](#)):

With the declining nutrient density in our food, it's become increasingly difficult to eat a truly balanced and nutritious diet. But our guest today is here to change that. He's one of the nation's leading organic food experts called an Organic Sensation by the New York Times, and is on a mission to establish a truly clean, organic lifestyle for all. This is the story of Organic Insider with Max Goldberg Max. So happy to have you on the show.

Max Goldberg ([00:28](#)):

Caspar, thanks for having me. It's, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about organic.

Caspar ([00:32](#)):

Yeah, and I mean, there is a lot to talk about here, and there's a ton of confusion in it, but I wanna start with, of course, your story, because you're not the, I think normal person you think of that just gets into organic food and talks about, cause you have to do a little bit different background, somewhat similar. I mean, I come from a finance background, but tell the audience, you know, where you started, what, what, you know, really brought you into this field you know, why you're so passionate about it.

Max Goldberg ([01:00](#)):

You know, the journey really started in 2001. I, I spent right after college, I, I worked on Wall Street in investment banking, got my MBA at Columbia and, and was in the, you know, finance and technology world. In 2001, I had a sort of a real life-changing event, was this woman I was dating at the time. We went to go visit her in New Mexico, that we were going to go visit her naturopath in New Mexico. And I was there and I was like, what's the deal with organic food? And she's like, don't, don't we need the chemicals to kill all the bugs. And she's like, no, we don't need the chemicals to kill all the bugs. And then I left that trip and went back to New York and did research. And really ever since that day I've been eating, or since I got back to New York and really started researching, I've been eating close to a hundred percent organic since that time.

Max Goldberg ([01:47](#)):

And I had started making some real changes in my life a few years earlier. In, I quit drinking in 1999. I quit cigarettes in 2000, in the summer of 2001. I quit antidepressants. I was on antidepressants for close to 11 years. And that was one of the reasons that I, I quit the medication, was because I found organic food. Here. I was running around New York City looking for food that didn't have chemicals, you know, was popping a chemical into my mouth. Each morning. I'm like, this doesn't make any sense. And I knew, I just knew in my bones. I'm like, I don't ever foresee giving up organic food ever. I was like, I just don't see it. And and then, you know, so se and several years later, in 2004, I quit smoking pot. So I've been free of everything for, for decades.

Max Goldberg ([02:33](#)):

Never relapsed once on any of them. And just, it was around that time it really started making changes in organic for just, for for whatever reason, really spoke to me. And I was like, you know, it, it was, at that time it was really about my health, about not putting the, the, the GMOs and, and the toxic chemicals into my body. But as I later got into it, and when I started writing about the industry in end of oh nine and beginning of 2010 and became more of an activist in the movement it became more than just what I'm putting into my own body, what we decide to eat and how we purchase our food at

supermarkets, at the restaurants, wherever is a real political statement. And for me, it's about protecting the farmers so that they don't have to get exposed to these super toxic chemicals.

Max Goldberg ([03:23](#)):

These are people we don't hear about who are completely marginalized, have no representation, and people don't really think much about. So every time we buy organic, that means some farmer is not exposed to these, these toxic chemicals. So it just, it, it just really spoke to me early on. And I wa you know, in 2001, I didn't think I was gonna have a career in it. I didn't even know there were organic trade shows. And and then, you know, 2009, that's when blogging started to take off. And, you know, someone said, oh, yeah, there's an org I was in in Boston at the time, and someone said, there, yeah, there's this asorganic trade show happening right now. And I literally called up, I got the woman who ran the press room her number. I called her up, I said, I told her who I was. I said, I don't have a website, I don't have business cards, I don't have anything, but can I come to the show? I'm launching a launching a site. She's like, sure, c, c come on down. And and, and that was really the start of it.

Caspar ([04:21](#)):

Now, listen, I all say food is medicine. You know, it, it could heal in some ways, but it also, there is the counter, the polarity to it. Food can be, you know, disease written basically lead you into a path of disease. So for you to get off into a prep, to go down this route and find it that way is really interesting. And, you know, I, I find it also very interesting that we're even using the word organic before food. Because, you know, a hundred years ago we went even need to use that because everything was organic from nature, not, you know, and it's not ridden with chemicals and everything else, but we are where we are today. We created a little bit of a monster in many ways with G M O and pesticides and glyphosate, everything else. But there's still tons of confusion. I mean, you are an expert in this. What do people need to know about just the term organic in general when it supplies for food?

Max Goldberg ([05:12](#)):

Well, it is a term that's regulated by the US government. So what you wanna do is you wanna look for, so if people like don't know what organic is, you go into the store and you look for the organic seal, U s d, organic seal, it's round oftentimes it's green, and you look for that on the product. And so companies cannot just slap the word organic onto a product I hear all the time, oh, they're just saying it's organic. I mean, there's no question that there are problems with organic, and we can get into that later on, but it is illegal for companies to just slap on the word you know, or, or an organic product unless you are, you know, under \$5,000 in sales. But in general, it is illegal to do that. So this is regulated. There are, there are laws, there are enforcements there, there's a third party certifier that brands need to get to come in and validate that their product is in fact organic. So this is, this is a, a regulated term you know, overseen by the US government.

Caspar ([06:12](#)):

Now, at the same time, I do feel there's still confusion around, let's say non G M O versus biodynamic sustainable, all these different terms around almost like eggs, right? There's cage-free pasteurize, you know all these other ways. But what exactly do you look, are you looking directly for that seal when you go into any place to shop and you want the, the highest quality organic food? Or let's even go beyond that and say produce, because I, I, I really want to hit on what people are kind of taking home to cook with and vegetables and fruits. Is there something we like as consumers should be looking at or fearful of when we see,

Max Goldberg ([06:52](#)):

I mean, you wanna, you wanna look for the U S D A organic seal that is the baseline when you're shopping at a supermarket, that is, that's what you wanna look for. So there's something else. So, so number one, you wanna look for the U S D A organic seal. I mean, that is just, that is widely accepted. 62 billion industry. So that's what you wanna look for. If you're going to a farmer's market, there are a lot of farmers who refuse to get certified or drop their certification. That doesn't mean it, you know, that you should necessarily not buy from them. But you, what you wanna do is you wanna say, do you, do you use chemicals? Do you spray? And they say, well, we, well, yeah, we do. I've, I've been in plenty of farmer's markets where they're very honest and they tell you, now there might be some, some people that are not as honest, but a lot of these farmers will tell you. So you want to, you know, they, they may say, Hey, we do everything, or we're beyond organic. We just don't, we, we have an aversion to the to the US government, to the, the USDA's National Organic Program. But in, in the market, I, the, or I look for the organic seal, that that is a baseline.

Caspar ([07:57](#)):

And is the organic seal also that you can't use artificial fertilizers? Is that part of it? Like, how far does it go as far as chemicals versus artificial versus truly, let's say a very biodynamic and natural type of approach to farming?

Max Goldberg ([08:12](#)):

Yeah, no synthetic fertilizers, no super toxic pesticides, no GMOs, no irradiation, no sewage sludge, which is used unconventional food. So you're, you're really getting, you know, a, a lot of the big things are removed. That being said, you mentioned non G M O before. Well, why, you know, a lot of people think, cuz G M O is such a buzzword, they say, oh, well this is non G M O, it's okay, well, no, it's not okay. Because non G M O only means non G M O. And that's if it's verified by a third party certifier, like the non G M O project, which has the I think it's the butterfly in, in the logo, I'm sure, I'm sure you've seen it. But non GMO does not mean, you know, free of glyphosate atrazine, all of the, the, the, the super toxic chemicals. So if someone says, oh, this is fine, it's non G M O, it's like, no, it's not fine that it's non gm o it means no GMOs, but it doesn't mean all of the other super toxic chemicals.

Caspar ([09:08](#)):

So you have this ability to have someone actually labeling it going in, seeing that's organic, add that U S D A you know, sticker onto it. Wh where therein are the regulatory failures of what's going on right now in the organic food world.

Max Goldberg ([09:23](#)):

Where are the failure failures in organic? Yes. Okay, there's several. Number one, the, one of the big controversies that I write about all, all the time in my newsletter, an organic insider is hydroponics inorganic. So what is hydroponics? Hydroponics is growing plants, and essentially water. Now hydroponics violates section 6,513 of the Organic Foods Production Act. And what does all this mean? It means that in the organic rules passed by Congress in 1990, it said farmers have to have a management plan that fosters soil fertility, growing plants in a bucket of water, does not foster soil, soil fertility, and is a complete violation of the organic rules. However, lobbyists trade groups have been able to somehow manipulate the system, confuse regulators. Now, a majority of the tomatoes sold nationally are hydroponic the organic ones, a lot of the berries and an increasing number of the greens.

Max Goldberg ([10:26](#)):

And what does this mean? When we buy organic, we want stuff that is grown in the soil that's, as you know, nutrition starts in the soil. And so when you're, when you're eating, you know the, these, these fruits and vegetables that are grown hydroponic, you're not getting that nutrition from the soil and all of the billions and billions of micro the biota from the soil, all the microorganism or, or organism organisms from the soil. So that's number one is that a lot of people are buying organic hydroponic. That is not, that these are, these are products that are not grown in the soil and violate the Organic Foods Production Act. And there are lawsuits going on with this. So far we have not been successful for whatever reason. So that's number one. Number two is around organic factory farms, dairy farms, egg farms.

Max Goldberg ([11:17](#)):

There was a big investigation in 2017 that the Washington Post did. And they exposed this, this massive organic dairy farm where the animals, you know, a apparently were not going outside, they me, they measured the omega-3 levels and they were comparable to conventional milk. The U S D A is not cracking down on these factory farms at all. And this is a real problem because a lot of people think, oh, we'll go to the big box store. And, and I hear this all the time. Oh, we got our, we we got our organic milk for \$3. It was so cheap. Like, well, you're, you're getting what you pay for for these. Most people don't understand it, but you're getting what you pay for, even if it has the organic seal. Just because it has the organic seal does not mean that all products are the same.

Max Goldberg ([12:02](#)):

Like all organic milk is not the same at all. There is a massive difference in quality. There's a nonprofit group called the Cornucopia Institute. They, they put out all these different scorecards of organic products, rating the, the, the best of the worst because there's such a discrepancy in practices of, of production. So hydroponics that's, that's a big one. Organic factory farms. And the other big controversy has been fraudulent, organic imported grains pre-war from Turkey and Ukraine. A again, Washington posted a massive investigation about this and that these are the grains. It's crazy to think in the US we have to import organic corn and soy because we do not have enough grown in the US to meet our needs with all of the farmland we have in the US and all of the G M O corn and soy that we grow in the us.

Max Goldberg ([12:57](#)):

We do not have enough supply in the US to meet our domestic needs. So we have to import it. And there have been massive problems with fraud. Again, the Washington posted a big investigation of this in two, 2017, exposing all this. And the U S D A just passed a few weeks ago, something called the strengthening or Organic Enforcement Rule. It's gonna, it's gonna tighten things up, but at the end of the day, there has to be, there has to be a will from the U S D A to really want to crack down regardless of whatever rule is in place.

Caspar ([13:30](#)):

Yeah, no, it's, it's, it's kind of frightening that there is basically no kind of non-G oil, organic corn, soy, all these other things are kind of going away, it seems like, at least from the US standpoint. And then comes the argument that, well, organic is, is, is very nice, but it's not sustainable and scalable for the mass population and our earth right now. What would be your counter-argument to that?

Max Goldberg ([13:54](#)):

I think that's all propaganda. That's, yeah. There, what people need to really understand is when you see all these negative articles in the press about organic, organic is worse for the environment, organic can't feed the world. This is pure propaganda, a very orchestrated and calculated campaign to discredit organic period. Organic is a major threat to the chemical and G M O companies. And what people need to understand is the people selling the GMOs are the same people selling the chemicals to the farmers. They're the same. They're not different. They're the same. They're selling the farmers, the chemical, the, the G m O seeds. It's the razor in the razor blade analogy. They're selling them the seeds and you gotta buy glyphosate or whatever the chemical is to spray on those GM O seeds. So this narrative that organic can't feed the world, the majority of the farmers in the world are these small farmers.

Max Goldberg ([14:47](#)):

They're, they're, they're, they're, they're not these industrial farmers. It is all propaganda. And people should not believe it. I mean, what is gonna be, what is gonna be better for the world? Organic, a chemical free farming or farm or, or, or a farming method that enriches major international conglomerates with their patent protected seeds, with their you know, glyphosate, which is the, the, the most widely used chemical in the world, is known as a probable carcin called a probable carcinogen by the World Health Organization. This is sprayed everywhere. There's been massive backlash. The lawsuits and backlash against us. Is, is, is that really better for the world that we should be spraying this toxic chemical on our farms and on our schools? And it gets into the water and the air it, you know, so it, the backlash against organic, everyone gonna need needs to take it with a grain of salt. And there is a very orchestrated campaign to discredit organic.

Caspar ([15:51](#)):

It, it, it is a huge propaganda piece, and it is a huge amount of lobbying that goes in, in deception in a sense. And I think some people are seeing through, although some, you know, are part of the confused, I think majority that still have a hard time understanding, you know, the whole idea about, you know, cows being dangerous to our environment and to you know, methane gas being kind of taxed in New Zealand. You know, there's so much going on in I think this climate change and you know, eco warrior type of environment. But how concerned are you about things like Bill Gates buying up a lot of farmland in the US and again, that level of propaganda now almost going to this feverish pitch?

Max Goldberg ([16:33](#)):

Yeah, it, it's, it's a real concern because he totally, interestingly, he, he has an investment. He invested in a company in organic milk company called Neutral Foods. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> and it's a carbon neutral milk company, but he is very pro G M O, there's no way around it. So him buying up all this farmland, it's a real concern because getting young farmers into organic is, is, is, is a problem because farmland has become so expensive. And also, the, the other thing that's really challenging in inorganic when it comes to the farmers is in the dairy sector, is that because the U S D A has allowed all these organic factory dairy farms to proliferate, it's artificially pushed the price down of, of organic milk. And these small organic farmers in New England and all over the country, they, they can't compete and they're going out of business quickly.

Max Goldberg ([17:30](#)):

And it is very scary because, I mean, not only for their financial wellbeing, these are people, salt of the earth, people that have been doing this for decades. The organic industry was built on the backs of small, organic farmers. This was, this was a movement back then. This was not an industry, this was a

movement. These people were going outta business, losing their livelihood. And the other thing that's doing, and when we cir, if we can circle back to the hydroponics, we as consumers are losing choice at the supermarket. When you want to ha when you wanna go to the supermarket and buy an organic tomato grown in nutrient-rich soil, that's becoming very difficult and will soon be next to impossible if we keep going at this, at this rate and berries and greens. So it's gonna be increasingly more difficult to find this in the supermarket. Same with organic milk you know, from cows at small, organic grass fed dairies around the country. It's gonna be harder and harder, and we as consumers are gonna lose choice when we go to the supermarket. And that is another real danger.

Caspar ([18:35](#)):

I was once at an event focused on making food more accessible, good quality food, more accessible. I remember Elon Musk's brother was there talking about, you know, the, the cost of, of a lot of what we're doing, especially with produce, is shipping it all over the world. And it's not good for the environment, of course, when you get things from, you know, Argentina shipped up to New York when it's outta season. And, and his whole idea was to build, you know locally kind of greenhouses around that. I don't know if it was actually the hydroponics, maybe you know a little bit about this. What, is there any viability to creating kind of local greenhouses where most of the stores in that area would then give those vegetables, fruits, basically over to that in a controlled environment? Not in a real environment. And I heard a counter debate from a chef there, actually, but I wanna hear your opinion on this idea.

Max Goldberg ([19:29](#)):

Yeah, Kimbo Musk is a big hydroponics advocate. And I'm not against hydroponics per se. I'm against hydroponics, inorganic, I'm against being called organic. So yes, I believe that eventually things are going more local. But this is, this all requires capital. And you see some of these big companies, they're, they're, there's one a conventional company, I believe it's App Harvest. They went public, they did a spac. And I think they're, they're not organic, but they're growing in, in greenhouses. I believe it might be hydroponic. I'm not a hundred percent sure, but they're having a lot of trouble. But I do think that things ultimately are going to become a lot more local by necessity. And we saw it during Covid where people started, you know, buying a lot more from their local farmers. So I do think we are gonna move in that direction, and, and I think we should move in that direction. I think that if we can buy organic fruits and vegetables that are in season locally, that's better than shipping something from around the world. Now, I am all for supporting farmers from around the world. I mean, we just can't grow coffee in New England and or bananas. So yes, some of these foods are, are gonna come from, or, or coconuts are gonna come from different parts of the world. But I think we are definitely moving in that direction. It's just a matter of financially, how, how does that happen?

Caspar ([20:51](#)):

Right. And there are other concerns. I know you, you've mentioned this right before you jumped on this idea of G M O 2.0 mm-hmm. <Affirmative>, can you, can you talk about that a little bit? Cause I'm sure a lot of people haven't heard of this. To most people, it's either G M O, non g m O, that's what we look at. But there's something new to this. Yeah,

Max Goldberg ([21:07](#)):

There's, there was sort of the first generation of GMOs, the, the, the, the genetically engineered corn and soy that, that are in all, all the, the, the processed food products. And, and now there's a whole new

generation of GMOs where this is becoming the sort of, this is the, they're creating products out of this single G M O. They're genetically engineering creating these novel, genetically engineered proteins. And this is, so you're seeing it with the animal free whey protein using synthetic biology. And all they're using, the, the terms they're using is synthetic biology and precision fermentation, lab grown meat. I mean, these are the, these are the products that we're starting to see more and more of. And Dr. Michael Hanson, a consumer report, he has a quote in one quoted in one of my newsletters. He said, all these companies are using these fancy terms cuz they're trying to confuse consumers.

Max Goldberg ([22:07](#)):

All this is, is genetic engineering. So these are all these new companies that are getting funded by Silicon Valley, and all it is is sort of the next generation of genetic engineering. And people do not know what they're eating. I mean, these are novel proteins that have never been in the, in, in the, in the human food supply before. And they are really attracting a ton of money. Celebrities are investing, and what they do is they sell everyone on the sustainability story. And what they don't tell you is how they, they, they can't tell you how safe it is because they've never been around for there, there's no history of this in the food supply.

Caspar ([22:46](#)):

Yeah. It's, it's a scary time in general. I think our, our whole food industry where we, we actually get our food is completely being manipulated, controlled and, and turned into sort of a, you know, toxic thing where people don't really know what they're ingesting anymore. And, and that's a huge concern, I think because you, you, you know, it's the one thing that nourishes us is food. It's always been like medicine. And in this case, it's becoming the thing that's causing the most to be, you know, diabetes, heart disease, everything else. Can you make a case, because I know a lot of people listening go off of cost, they look as food as, yes, it's something I eat, but it's cheaper. It looks exactly the same. And I heard people saying it's the same nutrient density, everything else. Can you make that case of why people should dish out a little bit more for organic, even beyond, let's say the, the story of the farmer regenerative ecosystem purely on a health basis? What would be that case?

Max Goldberg ([23:44](#)):

Well, if you look at the studies that have been done, organic has higher levels of omega three s when in milk, they have higher levels of antioxidants and polyphenols. They've done studies with, you know, tomatoes and ketchup and onions. I mean, there are so many studies that show higher level of antioxidants and, and, and those types of compounds. So that's number one. And number two is, you know, you're getting what you pay for, as we talked about at the beginning about food being medicine. You know, why would you want to put anything but the best into your body? You know, I know cost is an issue, and some people will say, listen, I just can't afford it. Okay. That, that's totally understandable. And then when you're spending \$10,000 to go on this, you know you know, three day weekend you know, in in the Caribbean, you know, everyone's gotta make a decision about how they wanna spend their money. And some people don't wanna spend it on food. We, we have been ingrained, it's been instilled into us from a very early age that food is supposed to be cheap.

Caspar ([24:52](#)):

Yeah.

Max Goldberg ([24:53](#)):

It's supposed to be, you know, it's supposed to be cheap. And that is the problem is culturally, people have this idea that you're not supposed to pay a lot for food. And, and that has really not served us well because food that has grown well with care and love and grown responsibly, grown in a and, and, and that has grown well by a farmer who really takes a lot of care, that is not an inexpensive process. So I think people need to shift their thinking about, you know, cheap food and that you're getting what you pay for, even in organic, when you go to the big box store and you get the absolute cheapest thing you can find, that is organic. Trust me, you're getting what you pay for. You're not, you're not getting the same product you know, milk, for example, that you're getting at a small organic you know, grass-fed farm.

Max Goldberg (25:47):

You're just not. So it ultimately comes down to what are your values, what do you prioritize? And I understand organic can be more expensive, but there are ways to do it that that are, that can help offset those costs. But ultimately, it, it, it comes down to prioritizing, you know, really healthy food. And the other thing is when you say, I'm not gonna buy organic, I'm gonna buy conventional. Every time you do that, you're enriching the G m O and pesticide company. So that is why I do not go out to the trendy restaurants, because I do not want my money going to these people.

Caspar (26:27):

So you're saying most trendy restaurants are using GMO foods, or Absolutely.

Max Goldberg (26:32):

Gmo, absolutely. Granola oil. I

Caspar (26:33):

Know. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's, it's, it's a sad fact that, you know, so many of these places that pride themselves on quality don't start with a quality ingredient. It's almost like a, a modified thing that tastes good, I guess, in the end. But it's starting with, you know, subpar ingredients, which again, people don't know this, and they just assume that it's a, a very, you know, high quality product.

Max Goldberg (26:57):

Some high end restaurants, maybe they, maybe they're using organic chicken, or maybe they're using some organic greens. I'm not saying all aren't, but it's very hard to find organic food at restaurants. And now you can find certain things, but it's very hard to find organic restaurants that are really doing it legit, that are doing it the right way. But when you go to most restaurants, almost all of 'em they're using GMOs and you might not know it, it's probably in their oils or it's probably, you know, in their corn, or if not, if it's, if it's, even if it's not g m o, even if it's conventional, you know, most likely you're getting, you're eating food that's been sprayed with glyphosate.

Caspar (27:34):

Yeah. I mean, there, there's so many ways you know, these things get, enter our bodies, but we usually don't think the Michelin star restaurant is one of 'em when it absolutely can be. Let me ask you, what, what are your thoughts on Whole Foods of just trying to shop there organically? Is that something you are, you know, still behind after everything Amazon purchased it? There's been saying that, you know, a lot of their produce now is nonorganic or, you know, it's kind of deceiving to people, but what are your thoughts on it?

Max Goldberg ([28:00](#)):

You know, I, listen, I, I support Whole Foods in what they're doing. And I think actually some of the stores are, are, are, are, are, are better run now that Amazon owns them. There was a lot of talk in the beginning that they were gonna kill local products and that everything was gonna be centralized out of Texas. And, but there are a lot of pro local products still. So I think by, by and large, they've done a good job. You know, when people say, well, all their produce is conventional, a that's not true. And you can go and buy the, the produce that is organic. Now, if you go to some of the salad bars and prepared foods, you know, I would say I haven't gone there lately and, and, and purchased that. But in a lot of the stores, you know, you're not gonna find a lot of organic in the prepared foods section. But by and large you know, I go to Whole Foods all the time and you know, overall I'm supportive of what they're doing.

Caspar ([28:57](#)):

No, I'm, I'm, I was a fan also, especially John Mackey. I, you know, when it was early on days, it was a, you know, a great idea to, to do that. And it just blossomed. And then Amazon took over. And always, there are concerns when a very large corporation like that, that you're gonna cut corners and everything else, but you know, it's yet to be seen. You're saying it's good. I mean, I believe that wholeheartedly. What about the idea of add-on labels? I know, you know, that's something that is something to consider when looking at organic. Your thoughts

Max Goldberg ([29:28](#)):

Add-On labels are very important. So let's, let's explain what add-on labels are. So when you go to the market and you see the organic seal, you, you probably see a, on almost every product, you're gonna see a lot of seals at the bottom, right? You do. So let's talk about add-on labels for organic. There are many of them, but the, the, the, there are two that are really important. And, and while you're listening to the two of us talk about organic, you might feel this is a doom and gloom scenario, and it's not. There's actually some really, really good things going on in the organic movement, and that there are very committed people trying to reverse things, trying to really save the organic food system. There's two add-on labels. One is called Regenerative Organic Certified, and the second one is called Real Organic Project.

Max Goldberg ([30:21](#)):

And so these are labels that essentially sit on top of the organic Seal. So to get one of these two certifications, you have to have U S D A organic as the baseline, and then there's a separate qualification to get one of those two c add-on labels, real organic project or regenerative organic certified. So let me explain what each of these are. So essentially both of these certifications came, were born out of frustration with the U S D A of the U S D A, not doing its job, and also a desire to raise the bar for what organic represents. U S D. Organic Seal is no longer the gold standard in organic. The gold standard is regenerative organic certified, and it is start was started by three C three entities. Dr. Bronners, the soap company, Patagonia and Rodeo Institute. Rodeo Institute is in Phil is in Pennsylvania, and it is where it's a nonprofit, is where the organic food movement was started in the 1940s by GI Rod.

Max Goldberg ([31:25](#)):

So these three organizations started the regenerative organic certified label. So they're three pillars, soil health social social welfare, and and, and animal welfare. So it's worker welfare, animal welfare, and soil health. Those are the three pillars. So they're raising the bar in those three areas. So people have to be paid a, a certain amount, minimum amount, they test the soil and they're, they're no factory animal

farms. The second label was really started by a lot of small organic family farmers in New England, because they were so fed up about this hydroponics issue because this hydroponics inorganic is driving a lot of these soil grown small organic farmers, completely out of business. So they said, we just can't win anymore. They tried for years and years and years to lobby the U S D A to lobby, the National Organic Standards Board, which is the 15 member board that makes recommendations to the U S D A about organic ingredients, processes, things like that.

Max Goldberg ([32:27](#)):

So they said, well, we have to do something because we are losing our, our peers are losing their livelihoods. They started something called the Real Organic Project, and that is an add-on label. They have certified about over a thousand farms throughout the us and that means no hydroponics, no no factory farms, no factory organic dairy farms or egg farms. And the third thing is, is no split farms. So you can't have half your farm be conventional, half your farm, be organic. So essentially, if you can go now, the real organic project, I know this might be getting a little in the weeds for people, but these are really important labels, and you're gonna be seeing a lot more of these labels on the supermarket. Real organic project has primarily, it is only been certifying farms up until this point. So you could find a handful of tomatoes.

Max Goldberg ([33:20](#)):

You can find some, some other, you know, one ingredient products, you know, fruits and vegetables and, and, and meats, things like that. R o c, regenerative Organic Certified Dr. Bronners has a coconut oil, that's r o c certified. Nature's Path has a, an oatmeal that's r o c certified. There's a company called Simply, they're doing r o c Quinoa. So you're seeing Lotus Foods has an R O c Rice, you're seeing more and more. And, you know, I'm, I'm not naming all of 'em. There's plenty of them. You can go on the R O C website I'm sure you can, we can put links to it after. But this is, if you can find, and, and real organic project is very difficult to find right now. But they just signed a partnership with this German company called Nacho Land, which certifies, I think 140,000 farmers around the world.

Max Goldberg ([34:09](#)):

So, real organic project is coming to consumers. It probably will really start to hit later this year and in 2024. So if you can find an organic product that's r o c certified or r o p certified, that's what you wanna look for. Now, let's talk about some of the other add-on labels, non G M O project verified. That's another add-on label where they actually go out and test high risk ingredients like corn, canola. I think they are testing now potatoes because G M O potatoes that don't bruise, those are really out there. So they're testing the high risk products. There's a, a, a, a certification that I'm involved with called the glyphosate residue free certification. So if you're concerned with glyphosate, which, which everyone should be, even if you're buying organic food an mean increasing number of organic brands are getting this glyphosate residue free certification.

Max Goldberg ([35:12](#)):

Because glyphosate has even contaminated the organic food supply. It's not, even though it's prohibited from being sprayed on organic food, it is contaminated our organic food supply, which is infuriating because we're buying organic so it doesn't have these chemicals so that you can, that you can go on their website and you can see all the brands and really what you, what, what, what I would say for consumers is consumers should be demanding. You should be contacting every organic brand that you buy from and say, I wanna know your testing results. I wanna see that you've tested that. It's free of

glyphosate. And if they say, yeah, we've, we've tested it's free. Say, I want you to post it on your website, it's not good enough for you to tell me. I wanna see the results. There's a company out there called sgo Food, Z E G O. The founder does more testing than anyone I've ever met. She tests for over 400 chemicals in every single product that she has. And she posts her website posts the results on her website. This as consumers is what we have to be demanding from organic brands, is we want you to test and we want you to post the results on your website and get glyphosate residue free certified at a minimum. So as consumers, we need to be pressuring organic brands to do this, otherwise they won't do it.

Caspar ([36:33](#)):

Is it going to be prohibitive to the small organic brands that are just starting up, or smaller farms or anything from a cost perspective to do all of this?

Max Goldberg ([36:42](#)):

Yeah, it is gonna add an extra cost to the brands, but I think it's a competitive advantage. Yeah. So if a brand says, Hey, we've done, we've done this testing, it's gonna really, you know, set them apart from most other brands. So I see it as a very important selling point. I don't think it's gonna break the bank to get you know, like a glyphosate residue free certification. It is an extra cost, but I think it can be sold. I know ze ego foods when, when, when dirt, when Covid hit, her business exploded because doctors knew we have to get the cleanest, purest food. And, and, and, and this is why because this, you know, Colleen, the founder, she's testing for 400 chemicals. Yeah,

Caspar ([37:27](#)):

No, it's, it, it, you know, you have a lot of this hope within this region to, you know, continuously improve and you, you see that there are all these new labels and everything, but still, are there things that you, yourself, even if organic are not going to eat certain foods?

Max Goldberg ([37:47](#)):

Well, here's what I would say is there are foods that I will be very cautious of unless I know that they've done their testing. Hmm. Because I'm involved in this glyphosate residue, residue free certification from the very get-go. I've been, you know, I've gotten an inside look about what's going on. Pea protein, lentils, chick peas. Those are really some of the ones that if, unless I know that they're certified, I'm very leery about, about buying those products at, at the market. Those are, those are, those are the high risk ones the legumes particularly so that, that's what I would say.

Caspar ([38:29](#)):

Yeah. I, I, you know, you always gotta be cautious in many ways, and that's why I'm actually very happy to hear there are these certifications, because otherwise, again, you have no clue. You could say organic, but still, like you said, glyphosate could end up on it. And that's never a good thing for people, especially when we're ready in a sick and toxic environment.

Max Goldberg ([38:47](#)):

Yeah. And Casper, you know, the big thing that's coming up now, and I wrote about it last year, is the PFAS chemicals, the forever chemicals. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, and I'm sure you know about, they're in the non-stick pans. They're in the the couches and the they're, every that is showing up inorganic. I mean, that's gonna be everywhere. And that's not a problem. That's not just unique to organic. It's

gonna be conventional. And that was sh that showed up last year and farms in Maine, and then about a month ago it showed up in organic eggs in Denmark. And so this is a real problem that's coming, and I don't think people have any idea wh what is ahead of us with this PFA s problem. There is no PFAS certification, pfa pfas free certification. I've been hearing grumblings about it. I've been hearing that it's kind of in the works. But I haven't seen anything yet. And that is gonna be the next big certification. So that's something that brands are totally in the dark about, and that's something we're gonna be have to ask, ask them about soon, about testing for these things. But it's not as simple as testing for glyphosate. It's, it's much more complex.

Caspar ([39:56](#)):

Oh, I'm sure. I mean, you look at how many chemicals are out there now, you look at this thing in that East Palestine, and you know what that's gonna do. What are your thoughts on that? These kind of, you know toxic spills, explosions happening all over the country in many ways, and I'm sure it has always happened, but it seems at a larger scale you know, the, there's a huge belt of agriculture in that area in general in Ohio, if you go a little bit west from there. But what are your thoughts on, on all of these kind of chemical and toxic spill that are getting into the environment, into the soil, into the waterways?

Max Goldberg ([40:31](#)):

Well, we, we live in a very toxic world where these chemical companies have incredible power. Yeah. And it's, and, and it's so unfortunate to what happened in Ohio, but we're being, you know, we're being exposed to all these chemicals that we, we have absolutely no say about No. And the chemicals companies have a massive power, and the, the oversight of these chemicals is minimal. And it's, you know, we've got to elect people. There's, you know, two things. We've gotta elect politicians who, who want to do something about it, right. And who wanna fight back and want to make organic food a priority. And I know this is a bigger thing, you know, but we've gotta get you know, campaign finance has to be reformed. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, you know, when corporations are funding all these politicians to get into office, these politicians have to pay them back. Yeah. So for us to really make a dent, you know, the, these campaigns ha all have to be publicly funded for us to get a real handle on all these different chemicals in, in, in our environment and, and, and have a real crackdown. Otherwise, the politicians, they get in there and they just, they, you know, some of them may have good intentions, but it just doesn't happen. The majority of the politicians are just controlled by the corporations. And, and, and that's just how it is.

Caspar ([41:51](#)):

Yeah. You learn about these connections with everything. Even the Norfolk South that, that was responsible for, the one in Ohio was, you know, giving donations to DeWine and others in Ohio. And basically, yeah. I mean, they're gonna get a free pass at this, and this will continue to happen. Yeah. And as it continues to happen, we are the ones that get burdened with it. So I think it's really important if people say, well, we're helpless to understand you do have some power. Is that something you talk about also on the LinkedIn group, the organic food industry that you basically run that's become this huge, what is it, 40,000 members now for around the world?

Max Goldberg ([42:28](#)):

Yeah. We, we, you know, I talk about it everywhere. The, the organic food industry group. We, we used to have meetups at at Expo West many years. And it was great. But yes, I mean, I consider myself a, an activist journalist, and activism is, you know, the, the reason I continue doing this because people need

to know what's going on. They need to be involved. And if they're listening to this today, hopefully they'll leave and, and, and, and get more involved saying that, I'm going to the farmer's market. I'm buying organic, I'm doing my, that, that's just not enough. People need, need to be involved. Yeah. No, they need to call their politicians. They need to join you know get on the mailing list of the, the important organic nonprofits and and, and, and, and really get involved.

Caspar ([43:18](#)):

Yeah. It's, it's really so important. We can't sit on the sidelines anymore. You can't just sit there and, and a few actions won't really turn things around. I think we've seen it how quickly things can accelerate, especially in modern times to a point where, you know, it's, it's beyond where it's, it's controllable in a sense where I think we're reaching that tipping point. So it's incredibly important to be active such as yourself and get involved with these groups like yours. Now, you also have a book coming out this year. Can you talk a little bit about that, what that's all about? I mean, it's a memoir. I, I understand. So

Max Goldberg ([43:51](#)):

It, it is a memoir. It is not an organic food book. I was, I was on antidepressants for almost 11 years, and I went off in the summer of 2001. It took me three and a half years to recover. I was suicidal. So it talks about before, during, and after the antidepressants and just, just about my journey and, you know, what happened. And, and, and, you know, it was a, a, you know, a, the, the defining moment in my life when, when I decided to go off, because I took the, took the pills for close to 11 years mm-hmm. <Affirmative>, and it numbed me. They numbed me emotionally. I was never, never super happy, never, never depressed. And so what I started to do was drinking. I started, I had a, I drank a lot because when I was drunk, I felt alive. And I developed a very bad drinking habit and put me in a lot of very, you know, precarious situations. And I eventually quit in, in, in 1990 1999. And so the book talks about before, during, and, and after the antidepressants.

Caspar ([44:49](#)):

Yeah. I, I mean, this is a subject that being in medicine, it's, it's, it's a very important one because now you see, you know, the idea of putting children on antidepressants. The idea of, of anyone with any kind of, you know any level of anxiety pan anything in a, in a day and age where we all have some, I think where it's kind of put onto us, we have fear all around us being bred up and kind of pushed onto us. And then the answer for most of medicine is go on antidepressant or go on a medication of some sort anti-anxiety medication. What would be your advice for someone that is feeling, Hey, I am depressed and my doctor is telling me. And, you know, what would be the advice to them?

Max Goldberg ([45:33](#)):

I, you know, I don't tell people what to do with their medication. I, you know, ev it's an individual, it's a choice that everyone needs to make. For me, I wanted to live a more natural lifestyle. I didn't want my happiness to be to, to, to bend on a, on, on a, on a pill. And I remember vividly, I woke up one day, and when I was, you know, deciding whether to go off or on, and I, I said or to go offer to stay on them, I said, how is it that I was born? And it's a miracle that we're all born, right? So, how is it that I, you know, this miracle happened that I was born, and the only way that I can get through life is from a chemical from a pill manuf made in a made in some manufacturing facility off the highway somewhere.

Max Goldberg ([46:22](#)):

That's the only way that I can get through life. I said, no way. But I think people really need to ask themselves, you know, what, what, what do they want? What do they want in life? And how do they wanna live? And it's up to everyone to decide how they want, how they wanna live, and, and in what way. And it's not for me to tell people what to do. My book is not a how to, it's just my story. But, you know, I, I, I wanted to live in a, with more natural more holistic and natural lifestyle. And, you know, a few of the things have been really critical for me, have been number one. And I didn't realize it at the time when I went on them. It was probably, you know, seasonal depression. I went to college in Providence, Rhode Island, and grew up in New England.

Max Goldberg (47:03):

And, you know, in New England, it gets dark at four or five o'clock in the winter. Yeah. And I, I'm very sensitive to sunlight, and I need a lot of sunlight. And so sunlight is a big deal for me. And number two is sugar. I didn't really understand the role that sugar played. And I eat very, very, almost zero refined sugar right now. And then just and you know, I've been a longtime meditator. I started meditating in, in 1991, and that has certainly helped. But really and then, and you know, I also had to quit everything. I quit the drinking and the drugs and the cigarettes and everything, and it's really coming to terms with not running away mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. So you know, so it was a combination of, of all those things.

Caspar (47:51):

Yeah. I, I think it's really important what you said there is to sit and ask yourself real questions and, and you have to answer them, right? Not let a doctor answer 'em, not let other people say, I feel great on answer, or whatever it is. You need to sit there and ask, right before I got on this you know, recording, I was talking with a ex Navy seal on, on a previous recording, and he was also suffering after he got out of the seals, you didn't know what to do with himself. He had all this structure there, and it wasn't in the real world. And he turned into depression, he turned to alcohol, these other things. It, it just came to that rock bottom point where he had to actually ask himself like, what, what am I doing? What makes me happy? How can I get, I was happy before.

Caspar (48:29):

Right? How do you get that back? And again, it's not because you're lacking some chemicals, you said it's not that. And I think there are so many options now that you could try the meditation, organic food, eating this way, you know, whatever it may be, sleeping more or changing your environment, as you said, sunlight, nature, that make that your last resort in a way, it's there, it's, it's almost like a fallback. And maybe you could do it for a short period of time. Also, I've heard that too, where people are super depressed over something, a serious trauma, and for a month or so, they used it because I believe that's how pharmaceuticals should be. They should be the crutch until you could heal and then you're off. But the pharmaceutical company wants you for, as a lifelong customer and hooked addicted. So did you find that, though? Did you find that the, there was an addiction at the end that was truly to the antidepressants?

Max Goldberg (49:24):

I, I don't think it was an addiction to the antidepressants. I just don't think I was on them for close to 11 years and just kept taking 'em and taking 'em and taking 'em. I didn't even really give it much thought, so I was kind of on the treadmill and didn't even, you know, and un un un there was an incident that happened and it forced me to re-examine why I was on them. And so I, I really never gave it much

thought. I was just taking 'em, I was like, oh, I have to take them. And that was sort of it. I just accepted it, and that was told I had a chemical imbalance and it wasn't my fault, and that was it. So you know what, Casper, what I think a lot of younger people don't realize is you know, when, when I went on them in college, this was, you know, 1990, there was no Google, there was no chat.

Max Goldberg (50:12):

Get you, you, you, you couldn't research this stuff easily. You now, I mean, you can go online and search all the natural methods and you can find everything in, in minutes. Back then, there was nothing so to in today, there's, we have the access to information is, is so different. It is such a different time. I didn't have access to any of that stuff back then. And also, you know, health and wellness was not part, not part of the cultural zeitgeist like it is today where it's it's, it's, you know, when I went organic in 2001, I mean, I got, I was ostracized. I, I mean, no one was eating organic back then. I, I mean, yes, you could go find it at the stores, but I mean, my friends and my family thought it was, you know, like crazy. Yeah. They thought it was nonsense. You know, no one says that anymore, but that's what it was back then. So I think we've got the, the, the information that we have access to now is, is just night and day. And that if people you know, want a different way, there's, there's plenty of information out there that's easily accessible to them.

Caspar (51:16):

Absolutely. It's, it's an incredible time we live in where you could have access to that. And I understand there's the flip side of it, that that too can become an addiction and a negative thing with social media, with technology and everything. But information is a beautiful thing. And if you want to jump down rabbit holes about organic food, about how to get happier and everything, there is an abundance of good information too out there, and you just have to site through. But you gotta do, you know, the work yourself and through organizations like yours, through your work, it's becoming easier and easier. So thank you for all that you do. When is the book available and when can people where can people learn more about you?

Max Goldberg (51:54):

Later this year it'll be, I don't have a, a time yet. They can find me at organic insider.com and living maxwell.com. But the majority of my time right now is spent on organic insider. It goes out every two weeks. Anyone can sign up. It's it's free. It's a freemium model, so it's free for everyone. There's paid model and that, that's that's how they can find me and the outliving Maxwell on Instagram. And I really appreciate Casper, you having me on giving me an opportunity to talk about what is going on in the organic food world. And there are a lot of problems, but there's a lot of hope, particularly with this regenerative organic certified and the real organic project. You know, I'm close with both organizations and I can tell people that there's some very committed people really trying to do the right thing and trying to, you know, save our food supply.

Caspar (52:47):

No, it's, it's a really, really benevolent mission and it's so important, I have to say. Max, thank you so much. Really quickly before you go, how's your tennis game these days?

Max Goldberg (52:57):

You know, I <laugh>, I, I, I, I was I play, I started playing competitively when I was eight and I, and I played in college and you know, I don't play much anymore. It's all about Ashtanga yoga right now. Oh,

Caspar ([53:09](#)):

It's all about yoga. Okay. I'm going to play tennis in a couple hours. I was captain of my tennis team, never all American like you, but still play twice a week. It brings me joy. Yoga bring Oh, cool. You joy now. So I saw that. Had to ask as it's on its flare. So <laugh> Max, definitely. Thank you again so much for coming on. Hey, thanks for having me. It was a pleasure. Yeah. As you heard, even with skyrocketing food prices, it's never been more important for our health and to that of the planet as well. To buy organic foods, our survival may just depend on it. Until next time, continue writing your own healing story.