



Season 2: Episode 8

Title: Potato Education: One Nutrition Translator Sees Opportunity

Description:

In this episode, Potatoes USA Conversation Architect, Natalia Cervantes, interviews the new Director of Nutrition and Industry Relations, Bonnie Johnson, MS, RD. Cervantes and Johnson discuss the various opportunities for educating those in the nutrition field about 'quality carbohydrates.'

To be featured on Potato-Cast, email Natalia@PotatoesUSA.com.

Learn more about Potatoes USA by visiting PotatoesUSA.com

See all the great information about potatoes, potato nutrition, or fun ways to cook with potatoes; visit PotatoGoodness.com.

Cervantes:

Hello everyone! Welcome to Potato-cast. A Potatoes USA podcast full of all your favorite potato industry content.

I'm Natalia Cervantes, Potatoes USA Conversation Architect and your host. Joining me today is our Director of Nutrition and Industry Relations, Bonnie Johnson.

Bonnie, welcome to Potato-Cast!

Johnson:

Thank you, I'm excited to be here.

Cervantes:

In the last episode, I mentioned that you've been in the nutrition industry for 25 years. That's a steep background. I realize that's not a short story, but could you share briefly with our listeners how you got started?

Johnson:

I'll try my best to keep it brief. I'm a registered dietitian with love for food and education. I combined those interests in one of my first jobs as the Director of a State/Regional program for the Dairy Farmers of Utah. From there, I worked on school foodservice and issues management for the National Dairy Council and then was the Director of Marketing for the National Peanut Board. Then PepsiCo recruited me to work on a school foodservice nutrition project. Nutrition has always been at the heart of what I wanted to do, and after the PepsiCo project was finished, I became the Director of Nutrition for Quaker. I loved all of these jobs, but none of them were in Denver.

Cervantes:

And you're from Denver?

Johnson:

Yes. My husband and I both wanted to come back to Denver. Eventually, we decided to pack and move and see what would happen. Then, a recruiter contacted me about this role; the rest is history.

Cervantes:

We are happy to have you. Your extensive commodity board and nutrition background is a significant asset. What has been your favorite part about working for Potatoes USA so far?

Johnson:

It may sound cliché, but it's the people! I love the team here in the office, and as I meet more and more growers, I know I've found my people.

Cervantes:

I couldn't agree more with you. We work with and for some of the best humans. I appreciate you quickly summarizing your vast experience so we can dive into this episode. In the last three decades, how has nutrition science evolved?

Johnson:

Oh goodness, I don't think we have enough time in this podcast for me to answer that in depth.

Cervantes:

That's how most of my guests feel, but that's because you're passionate about the topics.

Johnson:

Let me give you three highlights:

Dietary recommendations have changed from a nutrient-based system to a meal pattern-based system. This is important because people eat food, not nutrients, so it's easier for the everyday eater to implement the recommendations.

Access to information has grown exponentially, making spreading nutrition misinformation drastically easier. Publicizing early findings of studies and reporting on them as "proof" leads to confusion and even irritation with scientists when research doesn't match what was said yesterday.

Lastly, the food supply has changed. We have more access to more foods at more times of the year. This is exciting when we talk about diversity in meal patterns. While food used to be seasonal, now you can have most food year-round.

Cervantes:

Nutrition science has evolved a lot, and you're good at summarizing. Is this why you're called the nutrition translator?

Johnson:

Thank you, yes, you could say that.

Cervantes:

Looking at the Dietary Guidelines as they are today, is there anything you'd like to highlight?

Johnson:

Currently, the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that adults consume up to two-thirds of calories from carbohydrate-containing foods; however, the advice doesn't clarify the quality of the sources. Recently, Potatoes USA sponsored a session at the American Society of Nutrition Event. The session was called The Need for Nuance: Toward an Evidence-Based Definition and Classification of Carbohydrate Food Quality. In this panel session, three highly respected carbohydrate scientists discussed the problems with current carb scoring tools, like the glycemic index, proposed a new way of defining quality carbs, and provided a way for practitioners to put the new system into practice.

Cervantes:

This is fantastic, but what does this mean specifically for potatoes?

Johnson:

Potatoes are maligned regarding the glycemic index, which is solely based on one metric and misses the point of food as a package of beneficial nutrients, not just a delivery method for one single nutrient. The new system looks not only at total carb content but also free sugars, fiber, and potassium.

Cervantes:

What did the attendance look like?

Johnson:

We had 800 people sign up to attend the session. Primarily people with an interest in nutrition science. ASN symposia like this one attract mostly research scientists from government and corporate R&D programs with a sprinkling of practicing nutritionists.

Cervantes:

Sounds like it was a great opportunity to get this research front and center. As a registered dietitian, you need continuing education credits to maintain your credentials, right?

Johnson:

Yes. We call it CPEs or continuing professional education.

Cervantes:



And I can't imagine it's easy to find free CPEs, either. Through our work with ASN, do you think Potatoes USA can offer credits to registered dietitians?

Johnson:

YES! We're working hard to create a nutrition track that will be part of our Potato University. At the moment, Potato University offers education to foodservice operators, but this new nutrition track will be specifically geared toward registered dietitians looking for continuing professional education.

Cervantes:

This is going to be HUGE! That makes Potato University a double asset. Helping foodservice and nutrition professionals. Bonnie, thank you so much for joining me today on Potato-Cast. I appreciate you breaking down the impact we are making in the nutrition space for potatoes, and I know our listeners also enjoyed it. Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Johnson:

Thank you, Natalia. I'll leave our listeners with this parting thought. Nutrition misinformation is rampant, whether in traditional or digital media. Before you believe a sensational headline, look deeper for facts, and if you're still unsure, check potatogoodness.com, potatoesusa.com or reach out to me directly. I believe the fastest way to debunk nutrition myths is not to perpetuate them.

Cervantes:

Well said, Bonnie. I couldn't agree more.

This brings us to the end of our episode. If you have any questions for Bonnie, please email Bonnie@PotatoesUSA.com.

Potato-cast is growing. If you are an active member of the potato industry, we'd love to interview you about your operation. To submit yourself or your friend, please email natalia@potatoesusa.com. It would be a pleasure to hear from our dedicated listeners.

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All supporting documents for data provided in this episode can be found on potatoesusa.com. To see all the great information available about potatoes or new and fun ways to cook with potatoes, visit potatogoodness.com.

I am your host, Natalia Cervantes.
Until next time, have a tater-tastic day, everyone.