

Tiana ([00:01](#)):

Hello? It's Tiana um, oh, let me start again. Hi, my name is Tiana Dodson and I have a complicated relationship with vegetables. Um, so this, this I've been wanting to talk about, about this for a while, because I think I'm not unique in this way. I think many people have complicated relationships with diets. Oh, that was a Freudian lip. I think that's also true. I think lots of people have complicated relationship with Russia. Now I'm going to trip over my words as I was trying to be eloquent and cute and stuff. However, I think lots of people have complicated relationships with diets. However, one of the most complicated parts of those relationships might have to be with vegetables. I'm not unique in this way at all. I'm pretty sure. So I'm going to start with the maybe unpopular opinion. I don't know. I don't, I don't anyway.

Tiana ([01:17](#)):

Um, I have this belief that most people who either hate or really dislike vegetables or any specific kind of vegetable it's mostly because they've had them before and didn't like the way they were either prepared or how they were served or how they were like seasoned or whatever. Um, or maybe it's because they have connections with, um, being forced or coerced into eating them. So this is a historical trauma. And basically I think that that's really the S the foundation. Well, there was several reasons, but I think these are really the foundations of why people don't like vegetables because vegetables are delicious. They're also super variable. Like there's so many different kinds of vegetables out in the world. And for you to just like blanket say you don't like vegetables. Number one, there is zero way that it is possible that you have tried every single vegetable that is out there.

Tiana ([02:29](#)):

Also considering the fact that every day, these interesting horticulturist peoples are out here making new varieties of vegetables. Um, you can't just blanket dislike or hate all of them. And number two, I think that it's not possible to just hate all the things, um, because that would, well, that's complicated too. Anyhow. So I said, I have a complicated relationship with vegetables and I think the best place to start is with my own history. Um, so my, my history, yeah, so I'm biracial. Um, my mom was from Guam and I didn't grow up with my biological father. I grew up with my stepfather who was a black man from Georgia, um, born in 1933. Matter of fact. So most of the vegetables that were served to me during family meals, um, were usually dinner because that's the meal that we tend to eat together as a family.

Tiana ([03:42](#)):

Um, they were things that came out of cans and what we were eating were like canned peas, which were really my favorite, um, canned corn, green beans, um, and pretty much that's all I sort of remember now, it's funny because I was, I caught myself singing, like, as I was telling my story to someone wants that we didn't eat a lot of vegetables and that's actually not true. I don't believe that actually, because when I started like thinking about this and kind of writing out my ideas and my thoughts and my memories about this relationship that I have, I realized that there actually was a lot of vegetables in my childhood, but generally a lot of those vegetables were in like Chamorro dishes. So these are the dishes, you know, the traditional dishes of the indigenous people of Guam. And I would be able to experience these dishes because we would go to fiestas and celebrations and we would have potluck style.

Tiana ([04:53](#)):

So like people would bring these wonderful dishes, um, that I only got like, you know, periodically with, uh, throughout the year because of the different, um, celebrations that we had. And so there were vegetables in my childhood. They were not necessarily an everyday thing, but they were there. And I had a lot of like experiences of them that were actually pretty pleasant. Um, in addition, because of my stepfather's influence, we ate a lot of soul food, Southern style food. Um, and to be honest, there's actually a, quite a lot of vegetable within Soul Food. So the discourse around, you know, Southern style, soul food being, you know, quote unquote unhealthy, that's more a conversation, uh, telling you a lot about people's racial biases and anti-blackness more than anything because there is quite a lot of vegetables in soul food itself. Like, I mean, we ate fried green tomatoes, fried okra, we ate greens.

Tiana (06:00):

So collard green and mustard greens. Um, there might've been some kale in there. It's just, I didn't realize what it was at the time. Cause I was a child. Um, we had sauteed succotash, which is basically corn and squash, you know, like my mom gardened. So we had all kinds of like yellow squash and zucchini and just tomatoes flown out your ears. Um, we had good stuff and those vegetables came from our garden and ended up on our plates because my mom would make things like zucchini bread. So there were actually a lot of vegetables in my childhood. However, what I realize is that the thing that has really warped the narrative for me around what my real relationship with vegetables has been was dieting. Um, and I would say that well, I mean, I was conscious, I became conscious of the fact that I was fat and there was a problem with it when I was around eight years old. Um, and essentially this started me on a dieting journey. Not because anybody put me on a diet expressly, I was fortunate in that way, but my mom was a dieter and I had a larger body than my mom did. So I just got the idea that because she had to diet and there was a problem with her body. I had to be doing these things to additionally, there were other people who were making it clear to me by for example, making fun of me, um, when I

Speaker 2 (07:45):

Was at school and things like that. So,

Tiana (07:47):

You know, children can be cruel, but that's not inherent to children. That's something they learn from their parents. Ha so, um, fast forward, many years to when I started to have control over my own plate and really like my dieting, like my very focused dieting started when I left college and was out in the world as a professional person

Speaker 2 (08:16):

With a job and an apartment and bills

Tiana (08:19):

To pay, um, that I could barely manage. Okay. Anyway, I made it happen anyway, but I was dieting. And this is when I started doing weight Watchers when I joined weight Watchers. Um, this is when I was introduced to a salad as a meal. Now, granted I had probably seen salads as meals prior to this. However, this is the first time that it was really like very much in my face. Um, and basically like dieting makes food unpleasant, like food is a wonderful and amazing thing. And like it's so pleasurable and so sensual and so enjoyable and dieting just takes all of that away from everything. And it just warps it into like these will, it becomes guilty, you know, it, it, it just slathers the shame all over it. It's like, oh, are you

having pleasure with that? Well, you're probably wasting your points because this is probably a quote unquote junk food, or it's a quote unquote fattening food or whatever.

Tiana ([09:34](#)):

And it's just like, it just takes all the joy out of it. So I started to look at vegetables as a way to buy my sort of freedom in a way, because when I was doing weight Watchers, vegetables were free foods, you know, which meant that they didn't carry points with them. Okay. Certain vegetables, because some of the starchy vegetables quote unquote are the bad ones. And so you have to avoid those anyhow, um, vegetables in general were like this free for all. And you could have as much vegetables as you wanted, but the problem was like, I couldn't have canned vegetables because this was also at a time when the discourse around dieting started to also encompass health really into it. And so like a canned vegetable was not good for you. It was unhealthy because it was full of all this salt and salt is bad for you. And I agree salt is probably not optimal for the system if you're having too much salt, but that is also a completely different conversation that is completely individuals. So we need salt in our diet. It's important for our metabolic functions, you know? So I couldn't go back to what I knew because also I had absorbed all the

Speaker 2 ([11:00](#)):

Ideas that like, you know, soul food was bad because it was fried

Tiana ([11:05](#)):

And dieting. Doesn't like fried foods as well. So it was just like, what do I do? Well, I was left with steaming, uh, salads with sauce on the side. Um, and like, I guess boiling and basically like steamed vegetables, boiled vegetables can be delicious, but you have to sort of know how to make them delicious. And that was not something that weight Watchers was teaching me. So I was stuck with these mushy and delicious vegetables that just made the whole experience worse unless I was eating a salad, which was then just dry, just dry because when you put the sauce on the side, I mean, lettuce is great, but like let us be dry. So it was just not a great experience and I did not enjoy vegetables, which wasn't great. So like ultimately, um, I just, I just, I just, I had this negative association with vegetables and like, I, I know that vegetables are enjoyable.

Tiana ([12:26](#)):

I know that from here where I'm at today, but back then, it was just like, there was this pressure to perform, um, you know, healthy quote unquote healthy eating, which was basically this just very disordered way of eating. Um, there was also the reaction to being restricted from what I could eat, which was also causing me to hate these vegetables and these ways of preparation, because they were so representative of what I couldn't have and just like the feeling of deprivation that I was having. And that caused me to want to rebel. So like, you know, all of this, these tastes terrible. And I don't give a if they're healthy, I don't want them, you know, so all of that, just, you know, stick that in the bag of having complicated relationship with vegetables and complicating that relationship further. So

Speaker 3 ([13:26](#)):

Fast forward another few years

Tiana ([13:28](#)):

I found a health coach and with this health coach who was a raw vegan, she helped me try veganism. And so here I am in this fat body trying veganism, not for any real reason other than supposedly it was going to make me thin. And that's what I was really trying to get to, you know, regardless of the fact that over the top, I was like, I'm trying to be a healthy, I wasn't trying to be healthy. I was trying to be thin. And what I found about veganism that just was really difficult for me was that it was really expensive because again, you can't like, well, there's just like, there's, there's a school of thought around veganism, the people who are much more religious about it, where like your vegetables have to be peak freshness, you have to be doing farm to table. It has to be organic.

Tiana ([14:32](#)):

And like, you know, you just have to reach for that perfectionism. And I was like all about that at the time, because like I was like, yeah, y'all have the answer for me. I'm going to get that thin body that I've always wanted. So I'm going to play this game hard as hell. And the problem for me was that it was really expensive. It's very expensive to subsist off of super fresh vegetables that are organic and minimally processed and all of that. Um, you also need a lot of tools that you probably didn't already have because you can make zoodles, you know, zucchini noodles, um, like I guess you could make them with a knife and a cutting board that you probably have at home. However, you won't make them that pretty spirally shape without a spiralizer. Um, and they always get to be so thin and really nice when you use like this various specialty machine, um, this piece of equipment that ha you can't really use with many things because the one I have is plastic and it's pretty flimsy.

Tiana ([15:48](#)):

So basically like I have to buy expensive vegetables. I have to buy all kinds of tools and guess what those things take time. So to me, yeah, a zucchini noodle to make a zoodle, it takes a lot more time than just chopping up zucchini and tossing it in a saute pan. Um, like you have to have a good blender because all of the dressings require that you like, you know, blend up some things into a creamy consistency. And like, my health coach was also like anti oil because she was like so high on the health list hierarchy that she was just like, oil is nine grams of fat per calorie or nine, nine calories per gram, some ridiculous number. But basically that was too much, which means that you, where you use oil, you don't need oil, you should just use water. So this was also like taking sometimes the fun and like enjoyment out of things because you know, what fat does, fat makes things delicious.

Tiana ([17:00](#)):

It also, it makes them really nice and creamy. And so here I am in, in veganism land, like without a lot of the things that help make vegetables and vegan foods delicious because I was following her lead. Um, and I just, I was exhausted. I was exhausted by all of this because I was working two jobs and I just, I didn't have any options for like convenience unless I was going to be eating like crudités. So unless I was going to have baby carrots, which, you know, interesting note, baby carrots are not great because blah, blah, blah, politics, whatever. And so you shouldn't be eating baby carrots. Um, you should be buying carrots and chopping them up. And it was just, it was too much like there were so many rules, it was basically just another diet for me. And I was, it was just exhausted and over, just overwhelmed by all of it.

Tiana ([18:03](#)):

So I stopped being vegan also, cause it was making me mean because I was really upset and just not happy about how I was being forced to live, um, by staying on this kind of eating plan. Um, so I was like,

okay, I'm going to back up and I'm just going to eat green smoothies. And that way I'm going to like pack all of my vegetables and nutrition in right there in the morning. And it'll be so awesome. I'll have a super nutritious breakfast, super healthy vitamins minerals, fiber, great health in a cup. It's great. And um, yeah, that no was so ridiculous because again, you have to have a really good blender that can like not choke on the stems of the kale that you're putting in there, you know, um, because regardless of how great you are with taking kale off of the stems, there's still some pieces in there and you know, a carrot is hard, you know, your blender's got to really be able to deal with that.

Tiana ([19:17](#)):

And if you throw in a handful of cashews, um, even if those bad boys have been soaked, like, look, uh, your blender, your blender needs help. Um, so you need to have a good blender. And so I was fortunate enough to be able to spend the 700 euros or 750. I don't know, with shipping, it was so expensive. However, I had, I had a Vitamix, I actually still have this bad boy. Um, it's limping along, but I love it. Um, and like, so I had to invest in this expensive blender that I have to know, but I felt like I had to, because it was part of the culture, you know? Um, but it was just so much cleanup. I mean, I understand that a Vitamix is easy to clean. However, it's like, you still got appeal things. You still you're, you're still chopping some stuff off you.

Tiana ([20:10](#)):

Like, you know, you're chopping off like the edges or the stem parts and stuff. And it was just like, there was so much cleanup, there was so much prep work and the results were really mixed because sometimes that smoothie was hitting it. It was so great. And it was just like, I was sipping it and I was just like, I feel life coursing through my veins. And sometimes it was just like, oh, this is horrid. You know, like what I really need here is, um, I don't know, but things that are probably not going to be quote unquote health coach approved. Um, and it was just a lot, there was so much involved and like, regardless of how many people will tell you, like on the YouTube or their blogs or whatever, that it's like super easy, you can make them ahead of time, blah, blah, blah, whatever, like sitting down with a, like a brown, like a diarrhea brown thick drink.

Tiana ([21:18](#)):

Just, just ain't it sometimes just not, just not, you know? Um, and so like, I, I just couldn't, I couldn't deal with it again, exhausting. So basically I, yeah, I just, I gave up on that and for awhile, I was just completely and totally burnt out on vegetables on like trying to do vegetables and trying to be healthy on all of that. It was just, it was too much. And there's a lot of reasons for that. I'm sure, but we're going to focus on the vegetables, right? So fast forward to where I am at right now. And I have a child and that's complicated on its own because parenting, oh, it brings all your stuff, all of it up, everything. It is constantly a battle with yourself. And then this small creature that you have created, who is basically a sort of reincarnated version of yourself there to just try you at every step of the way.

Tiana ([22:34](#)):

Um, it's interesting. It's very interesting. So the challenge of being a parent is that you want to try, especially when you're somebody who has a history of disordered eating and you're recovering from it, you want to try to not give that to your child. You don't want to pass on that piece of intergenerational trauma. You want to try to encourage your child to be a good eater, quote, unquote, um, like somebody who is able to just like eat like really intuitively like honor their hunger cues honor their satiety cues, like not have this whole complicated relationship with any kind of food. You want them to be able to be like,

oh, it's time to eat. Great. I'm going to eat. What makes me feel good and fills my bag, my, my stomach. And, and that I enjoy this is what you want for your child, because you're a good parent and you want to love them. Well, um, it's emotional. It becomes an emotional experience because it's not just about the fact that you went out and you bought those organic sweet potatoes and you peeled them with your own hands and you chopped them with your own hands. And then you gently steamed them, gently prepared them, gently, mashed them, added just enough salt and butter and you know, love and energy and effort and labor to make them wonderfully creamy. When you mash them to have your child take a lick and go, this is disgusting, mama.

Tiana ([24:32](#)):

It's a lot. It's emotional. It's a lot. So I find myself at this point in my life planning meals for myself and other people in my household, and always having to think about the vegetables, they're always an afterthought. They're never an integral part of the conversation with myself about what we're going to have. They're always kind of like, oh yeah, there are no vegetables on this planned plate of food. What are we going to do? And basically it causes panic, some sort of panic. What do I do at this point? What vegetable works really well with this? What vegetable can I put in this that my child will not object to? Because this child has a freaking homing beacon for onions, regardless of how delicately and carefully you have chopped them into tiny little pieces and sauteed them until they are soft and caramelized and delicious, this child will just know an onion.

Tiana ([25:50](#)):

Is there like it's shining like a beacon and will refuse to touch it. So basically it's this whole fight, this whole fight about trying to find something where I am not being required to cook 17 different meals. Um, so basically I have been doing a lot of things, for example, ideal by ignoring the vegetable hierarchy, um, that I had been taught where, you know, fresh and organic is king and then frozen, if you absolutely must and then like fried or canned because you cannot avoid them. This was what I was taught. And basically I'm like, all noise. A vegetable is a vegetable is a vegetable. Be it fresh, frozen fried, canned, pickled, whatever. If it's a vegetable that, you know, it grew out of the ground somehow I don't care how we deliver it into our faces. It's a vegetable. That's what matters to me.

Tiana ([27:04](#)):

Um, and so like, I'm just about like, just figuring it out, like how do you get vegetables in? And so a great way to do it is to fold them into things that already have vegetables in them. For example, even though tomatoes are technically fruits, we use them in a vegetable sort of fashion. So if you're somebody who likes to make a red sauce, a marinara, a bolonaise and eat that over some pasta, yo this is a prime vehicle for vegetable stuffing. Now, granted, it's not your, um, grandma's marinara. But, um, you know, I doubt that actually, because I recently learned about something called soffrito, which is an aromatic mix of celery, onions and carrots. No, maybe it's bell peppers. Anyway, it's aromatics, it's aromatic vegetables that are cooked up together. Um, and sweated before you add on, um, the tomatoes and they give this wonderful flavoring to your tomato sauce base.

Tiana ([28:19](#)):

So it is a possibility that down your line folks, they're adding a lot more vegetables to their tomato sauce than you probably do today. Um, and like be creative with it, whatever you like, like, you know, chop it up, toss it in there, like make a chunky sauce or a sauce. That's barely red because it's got so much other stuff in it. Do that. Do you make it delicious? Just add vegetables, just try some stuff, um, blended in

because that'll also hide that texture. Cause I know some people, the issue with vegetables is texture. And so if that's your issue, then you just kind of blend some stuff together. And if you can deal with that texture, if you're liking that, there we go, marry them all together. You got vegetables in there. So this is what I do. I'm just trying to figure out, get them in where they fit in.

Tiana ([29:17](#)):

Like, um, when I make macaroni and cheese, I know this is blasphemy. I'm sorry. I sort of don't care. Um, things that are actually delicious to put in macaroni and cheese, uh, pumpkin, sweet potato, these things are really good, uh, with, if you mash them up and mix them into your cheese sauce. Oh my gosh. They're like lovely and sweet on their own. And I'm a big fan of like sweet and savory together. So maybe that's not your thing. That's all right. Um, but basically putting it in there, like it cuts some of that heaviness of the cheese and the pasta. Um, it adds this like light freshness and this little bit of earthy sweetness. It's so nice. Um, I like to do that. You can try it. It's cool. If you don't, that's fine. Um, pickles are awesome and it doesn't matter what kind of pickle, if it's just like, you know, the normal garden variety, American sandwich pickle, um, or if you're going to go like real fancy and get some Giardinera or like if you're going to go, you know, reach over into the Korean aisle and grab some of their pickled stuff.

Tiana ([30:33](#)):

I mean, Korean food is amazing. So like figure it out because pretty much anything that the vegetable can be put into a sweet or salty or any type of kind kind of brine. And now you've got shelf life. You've also got something delicious to add to a little bit of anything. Um, and uh, basically we're ditching perfection here. Like that's, that's all we're doing. We're just here to just try stuff. Vegetables don't only have to be salad, but if you can reclaim that relationship with salad salads are also an amazing thing to be eating and get fricking vegetables from. Also, you can add a salad to a sandwich. I'm a big fan of tuna salad. And I don't know why it's called salad because generally it's got mayonnaise in it, but you know, it's tuna. Anyway, I like to use shallots and pickles in our recently discovered jalapenos are amazing.

Tiana ([31:45](#)):

Um, pickled jalapenos are amazing on a tuna salad sandwich and I will give myself a generous helping of tuna salad on bread. And then I will put some lettuce on the top of that and the thing that's really nice about adding leaves of lettuce, whatever kind of lettuce. I'm not going to judge you. If your iceberg lettuce is what you're eating. Cool. You're eating lettuce. Good for you. Um, basically I like to put that in there and that is my sandwich. Cause that lettuce gives you this wonderful textural crunch and this like moisture, this like a flavor coolness. Um, it just is really a nice textural feeling when you have that on top of like the creamy, savory, uh, tuna salad with those little bites of like spice from the jalapeno and you know, like the sharp little notes of, of a shallot and Ooh, there's like, you know, uh, sweet and sour pickles yummy so we can see what Tiana likes anyway.

Tiana ([32:55](#)):

So like figure out ways, just like just experiment with it, like think about what you actually like, because, um, in the end, like vegetables that are frozen are awesome because you can take your time. You can take a little handful, you can toss it in, you know, and not worry about the rest of it going bad. That's perfectly fine. Um, don't be afraid to buy things that are, pre-cut like, I understand it's sort of wasteful plastic packaging, so on and so forth. And also they tend to be really expensive, but um, like a lot of grocery stores will have like a pre-cut mix. Um, that's not branded, it's just grocery store brand because they're chopping up whatever they've got leftover or whatever. Um, look for that kind of stuff in your, in

your, um, your produce aisles and like dips sauces, marinades. Absolutely. Yes. Those things also make your vegetables delicious.

Tiana ([33:59](#)):

So don't let anybody shame you for like slathering a piece of celery and all kinds and types of dressing. Um, in the end you're still eating celery and that's what matters. Um, and like any pre-made mix is really nice because it generally is like cleaned and chopped and mixed up ready to go for like whatever kind of sauce or protein you want to toss into it. Seasonings optional though, I disagree with that. Seasonings are never optional, always season. Um, yeah, sometimes if you need to buy it outside, that is also an option. If you can afford that and you have access to that in your, in your space, um, because I don't know about you, but over here I live in central France. McDonald's has an amazing set of salads and, um, they're expensive, but they're also nice large portions. Um, and if you get it as a meal, you can also get fries and a drink with it.

Tiana ([35:08](#)):

So it's like really a nice complete meal. Um, basically veg is, veg is, veg. So if it's a vegetable, it grew out of the ground. It doesn't matter what form it is in when it gets to your face. Like that's how we're getting vegetables in. And yeah, because though my relationship with vegetables is really complicated. And sometimes I have these moments where I'm trying to plan a meal and I want to have some vegetables, but I just can't make it happen. Basically. I am living my best fat life by leaning into the knowledge that both the ideas of perfection and quote unquote, the one right way are lies. And I am allowing myself to do my best, whatever that looks like. And I want that for you. So this has been Tiana with a complicated relationship with vegetables. I hope that this has been helpful in any way, shape or form. Um, yeah. Have a lovely day. Bye-bye.