

# In A Bite with Charlotte Mei

Season 2 Episode 5 - Farzanah Nasser

Full Transcript

## **Charlotte Mei**

Hi there and welcome to another episode of In a Bite. Now, are you someone that struggles with an autoimmune disease and feels lost as to what to put on your plate? Or are you confused with the advice out there with food and gut health? I mean, one day bread is bad for you and the next day it's the number one health food. Well, today our guest is here to help us understand these topics better and share some practical tools on navigating autoimmune diseases and gut health.

She's an accredited nutritionist based out in London, and she's equipped with in-depth experience within the realm of autoimmune diseases. Our guest for today is Farzana Nasser. We chat about how autoimmune conditions come about, the relationship between nutrition and our autoimmune health, and some really easy and practical food hacks that you can practise in your kitchen today. I hope that you enjoy this episode and learn lots from it.

Remember to also subscribe to the show and share this episode with friends and family whom you think can benefit from this. Just hit the share button you see on your screen.

## **Charlotte Mei**

So Farzana, thank you for joining us on the show. My first question for you really is how you got into the space of nutrition, the gut microbiome, and autoimmune diseases.

## **Farzanah Nasser**

Hi, no, thank you for having me. Excited to be here. So I, I mean, I initially originally graduated from finance and I was working in banking and it was when I was in my mid-20s that I had hormonal imbalance. I had an autoimmune condition. I had psoriasis. I had an ulcer and I felt like I was on the verge of burnout.

I went to see my doctor and I was given like different medications and I would open up the pamphlets and I would read the side effects and like what this could be covering. And so I never wanted to take any of the creams or the prescription drugs. So that led me down, you know, trying to understand what was going on. And that's when I went back to school and I retrained in nutrition and then functional medicine so that I could understand what was going on in my own body and be able to, you know, get myself into remission and reverse all of those conditions.

## **Charlotte Mei**

Yeah, and taking a more food first approach, isn't it?

## **Farzanah Nasser**

Exactly, 100%, yeah.

**Charlotte Mei**

Well, you know, the minute you said finance industry, I just thought stress. I mean, do you think that stress was one of the main factors for your conditions?

**Farzanah Nasser**

Yeah, no, absolutely. And I think that is for a lot of the people that I see as well. Stress is always, you know, driving, it's driving a lot of the issues of what's going on. And we know we can't ever get away from stress. We're always gonna have some stress, but it's been able to manage it as well as possible and have things in place to support a healthy stress response and, you know, knowing when it's too much and, you know, all of these things as well.

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah, for sure. And you know, since we're on this topic, a question did come through Instagram. And someone is asking if autoimmune conditions are due to environmental or genetic factors or others? I mean, we've spoken about stress. What are some of the other factors that come into play?

**Farzanah Nasser**

Yeah, so they say they call like they call it like the three legged stool. So there's always going to be a genetic predisposition. There's always going to be an environmental factor as well. And then there's also going to be, you know, you've got microbiome, leaky gut, these things as well, but you need to have the genetic predisposition and then you will have an environmental trigger, well that, you know, can then trigger it.

**Charlotte Mei**

So would you say that some people have the genetic disposition, but if they don't have the environmental factors to trigger it, then it may not come up?

**Farzanah Nasser**

Well, it's usually something that happens that will trigger the autoimmunity, right? So you have the genetic predisposition and say, well, maybe one day you get very stressed out, that could trigger it. Maybe there's a pathogen that's in your gut that you, you know, that we know different pathogens can drive autoimmunity as well. Maybe that could trigger it. We know things like blood sugar imbalances, you know, when you're not regulating things like that, that can be a trigger for autoimmunity.

We know, you know...there's so many things to look at. It's not just one thing. It's taking a 360 degree view of everything that's going on Because everything could be so there's so many things to consider when you're thinking about drivers and root cause with autoimmunity.

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah, yeah for sure. And you know, there's so many autoimmune diseases, right? You've got your Crohn's diseases, psoriasis, you mentioned to type 1 diabetes. So some of them surely cannot be cured and they are permanent, but are there some that can actually be improved or even cured over time?

**Farzanah Nasser**

You can never cure an autoimmune condition. Like they can never be cured once you have that, but you can bring it into a remission. So with the work that you're doing, you're never, you're never able to cure it because you'll always have that predisposition, you know, but you can bring it into remission.

So you can look at the different factors and improve things so that you're not experiencing symptoms, so that you can see the changes in your bloods. Something like psoriasis, you can see the difference in your skin. So there are different ways to measure it, to bring it into remission, but no, you cannot cure an autoimmune condition.

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah, yeah fair enough. So now just moving on to nutrition and food, what role does that play in managing autoimmune health conditions?

**Farzanah Nasser**

A huge amount because when we think of autoimmunity, we know that up to 80% of the immune system is in the gut. And so if we, there's so much that we can do to support our gut health. And so having a look in that and helping to support that will have an impact on our immune health too. We know for example, that a good immune system is affected by a good microbiome.

And when we think about a good and healthy microbiome, we're thinking about a diverse microbiome. So lots of different kinds of microbes. So diversity supports health. And so we know we can support a healthy and diverse microbiome through our diet. So including a diversity of plant rich foods.

So the studies that have been done have shown that you want to include about 30 different plant foods a week to support a healthy and diverse gut microbiome. So 30 can sound a lot to some people, but actually it's not too bad. If you think that it includes fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, herbs, legumes, spices, teas, grains, you've got a lot to choose from. There are a lot of different plant foods that you can choose from to help support your gut and then immune health as well.

But you know, it's not just about like food, it's about environment, what we're breathing in. So, another thing that we should be doing as well to support our immune health is just going for walks, getting into the forest, breathing in plant chemicals, because those all help support our gut health, which then has an impact on our immune health as well. But they say that your environment that you're in is what is dictating your gut microbiome.

So the food that you're eating, the activities that you're doing, everything that you're doing is then affecting your gut microbiome. So we do have a lot of power in supporting our gut and immune health.

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah, for sure. In fact, it was really interesting looking at the microbiome of people in different countries eating the same foods because their environments are just completely different. But going

back to that 30 plant food a week, that was a challenge that I embarked on earlier this year. And I'm someone that loves my plant foods, and I eat tons of it. So I did this challenge while I was travelling, and I thought, you know what? I'm not going to get anywhere close to it.

But surprisingly, I hit a good 37. And like you mentioned, it's not...

**Farzanah Nasser**

Amazing!

**Charlotte Mei**

...yeah and it's not that difficult when you start looking at things like herbs and spices, and you mentioned teas as well. That's something I'm gonna go into later as well, because you do share some hacks on that.

But we've spoken about foods that can help. And in terms of foods that worsen these symptoms, I just wanted to know what the mechanism for that is. I mean, my guess is inflammation, but would you be able to expand on that further?

**Farzanah Nasser**

Yeah, so we know that some foods can definitely be inflammatory for the gut, for the gut. So processed gums, all these kinds of things can definitely cause inflammation. So that's definitely part of it. But also, like if you're eating the wrong foods, you're also increasing problematic bacteria that's in the gut. So for example, sugars, you're generally feeding LPS producing bacteria when you have sugars and those kinds of foods.

So LPS bacteria are the ones that can drive inflammation as well. So they have a cell membrane, which has something called lipopolysaccharide in it. And so when this gets into the bloodstream, it can go anywhere in the body and that is a driver of inflammation. So a lot of the foods that we have can cause inflammation in the gut, but they can also feed the problematic microbes.

So with our gut, it's all about balance, right? We wanna have a good balance of good microbes and the food that we eat, and like I said, the environment, all these things feed those good microbes, right? So, anti-inflammatory foods, lots of plant foods, they're all the things that are feeding them, but the other foods, too much processed, too much refined sugar, those are feeding the problematic microbes and then allowing them to increase and that's what we don't want in addition to creating inflammation too.

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah. So, I mean, I would summarise it as, you know, just keeping a balance is not about completely removing one type of food, but just, you know, keeping those ratios healthier.

**Farzanah Nasser**

Yeah, no, absolutely. You never want to demonise, you know, a food group or a food, but it's always about balance, getting in, you know, it doesn't matter what diet you follow, you know, but it's all, you want to get in those plant foods. So, you know, whether you're vegan or vegetarian or pescatarian or

whatever it is, whatever your dietary preferences, it doesn't matter, but you want those plant foods in and you want them to take up about, you know, 80, 90% of your diet to get the positive effects on your gut, microbiome and then you know other systems of your body too.

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah. And you know, Farzanah, you mentioned something earlier about these sugars that produce LPS. Are you talking about the group sugars in general or are there specific sugars that you were referring to?

**Farzanah Nasser**

So refined, processed, like biscuits, cakes, all these kinds of things, anything refined. So like, you know, I'm not talking about sugars from like natural food sources, like fruit and stuff like that. I'm talking about it refined, processed. These kinds of things will predominantly feed, you know, the LPS producing bacteria in our gut.

**Charlotte Mei**

Gotcha. And then talking about misconceptions, what are some common ones that you see out there about people in their diet when they're facing autoimmune conditions?.

**Farzanah Nasser**

Misconceptions?

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah

**Farzanah Nasser**

I think one of the biggest ones is food has no impact on how you're going to feel. Food has no impact on your immune system. There's nothing you can really do. You have that genetic predisposition and accept it, but food's not going to play a part. When food is huge, right? I mean, we are ultimately made from the food that we eat. Everything that we eat ultimately makes the cells and has made, created a body from when we were small to where we are now.

Right. We have like a new body every seven years. So, you know, food does play a huge part in that. And we know foods can be really, really healing as well. So take, for example, stewed apples. So we know taking apples, you know, chopping them up and then stewing them for about 10 minutes releases pectin.

And that can be really an anti-inflammatory for the gut. So with different studies that were done with that, that was showing how it had a calming and anti-inflammatory effect throughout the body. It helped heal leaky gut, it helped increase good microbes and it helped reduce inflammation, not just in the gut, but throughout the body. So little things that we do and little things that we can't incorporate as well can have like a profound effect, like a really positive effect throughout the body.

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah. Do you have this recipe for stewed apples to share?

**Farzanah Nasser**

Yes, absolutely. I would love to share that with you. And I love to make them with things like turmeric and cinnamon. So that's even more anti-inflammatory and even more supportive as well. But yeah, I would love to. I will share that with you.

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah awesome. Okay, and I'll add it in our show notes for our listeners.

And speaking of these stewed apples, you know, you share so many food hacks on Instagram. I was just looking through them and we practised some of the same actually. So for example, pairing, you know, turmeric and black pepper together to help with the absorption and bioavailability.

And I just wanted to chat about a few others. This one really stood out to me. So you recommend to let garlic sit for a couple of minutes. Could you share more about that?

**Farzanah Nasser**

So when you let garlic sit, its active component, allicin, is allowed to activate. So when you use it in a heated dish, you can lose it. So allowing it to sit allows it to activate so you can retain more of the beneficial properties of the garlic. I mean, there's so many little things with foods, for example, the way we consume them that can have such a beneficial impact. Like even with green tea, if you add lemon, you know, that can be really beneficial. Lycopene, you want to add a, you want to add a fat, beta-carotene, like fat, like all these things just to improve the bioavailability and the benefits that it has in the body.

**Charlotte Mei**

Absolutely. I mean, that's one that I also recommend quite a lot when it comes to tomatoes to get cooked tomatoes. So like, you know, canned or bottled tomatoes rather, because the lycopene is more bioavailable there.

The next one you talk about, and you know, I mentioned this earlier, herbal teas, right? So you recommend using two tea bags for a therapeutic dose. Can you share more about that?

**Farzanah Nasser**

Oh, so with tea, I love having tea because it's just, I mean, over here it's winter right now, so it's a little bit chilly. And so to stay hydrated is really important in the winter months. And with the heating on, we all get dehydrated, but it's very hard to drink just plain water. So I love including teas because it's a really simple way to hydrate during the colder months.

Sometimes you want something a little bit more punchy. So it's nice to use tea bags, but like some ingredients, for example, echinacea, elderberry, you're gonna get more of the benefits. I mean, they say three tea bags, you get a therapeutic dose of the herbs that are in the tea bag, but even two is really good because it has more flavour, but you're getting just more goodness from it as well. And if it's like warmer climate where you are, what you could do is you could make, take a couple of tea

bags, let it seep overnight. And then once it's chilled, you could use it like in a smoothie that way as well.

But yeah, no, it's just a lovely way to get a therapeutic, more benefits. So like even things like lemon and ginger, or a echinacea and an elderberry, and especially when the ingredients are quite good for your throat or any symptoms that you're experiencing at the time, that can be really lovely in a really simple way to use food as medicine and support your health.

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah. Using tea and smoothies, I never thought of that one, but I'm definitely going to try that out. Yeah, and you mentioned being in a warm climate and making iced teas look. It's hot as here in Singapore, but I'm still drinking hot tea every day throughout the day. That's definitely something I took from the UK. So...

**Farzanah Nasser**

...even, sorry I was gonna say nettle and green tea are really nice if you like use them in the base of your smoothie. So like green tea is quite nice. So you'll get a little bit of caffeine in the morning if you want some. And it's a nice time to include it. And also nettle is really nice, like histamine issues, allergies, you know, depending on the season. So nettle is a really nice one to use in the mornings.

**Charlotte Mei**

Look, I just came back from Australia and there was quite a bout of hay fever there. Would you say that nettle tea would be helpful for that?

**Farzanah Nasser**

Oh no, absolutely. So nettle can help stabilise your mast cells. So it's a really nice one. That's one I love to use in the summertime or if anyone has any histamine issues, two tea bags, you know, just boiled water, cover it, let it seep overnight and then have it the next day. Or use it in smoothies. Also chamomile is a really nice one for that too. That's a mast cell stabiliser as well. So that's a nice one to do too.

**Charlotte Mei**

Do we know like the dosage for that? Let's say if we're not using tea bags but sort of like weighing it out ourselves. Is there any, like...

**Farzanah Nasser**

If you're wait, if you're not...oh, so like as in a supplemental form?

**Charlotte Mei**

...no, like you're using it as a loose tea?

**Farzanah Nasser**

You just use a teaspoon of it.

**Charlotte Mei**

Okay

**Farzanah Nasser**

So you just use, it can just, it can be supportive. It can just be helpful. I don't think you're going to find, you know, everything turning around with a cup, you know, with the chamomile tea, but it's just really help, you know, it's just really supportive.

I mean, things like net, like if you're reacting with your food, having it half an hour before your food can help some people, because it helps stabilize the mast cell. So if you are reacting to food, generally than having it before a meal, 30 minutes before a meal can be helpful. Otherwise just consuming it, sipping it during the day, it's just a nice way to use food as medicine.

**Charlotte Mei**

And I guess the key word here is support. It's not going to completely get rid of, let's say, hay fever, but it's going to help you feel a little bit better.

**Farzanah Nasser**

Yeah, no, absolutely. And you want to get to the root cause of it as well. So with anything that you're experiencing, right? All these things are there to support you, using food as medicine and to support your system. You ultimately want to find out what is driving it, where those imbalances are coming from, what triggered them, and support your system that way.

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah. And so when you work with your clients, I'm really curious to know, how do you go about finding out the causes of their imbalances?

**Farzanah Nasser**

So when I work with someone, the first thing I will send them is an in-depth medical history form. So everything that's been going on, from birth, antibiotics, dental health, relationships, what was going on in the first 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, the environment that they're living in, is there a mould? Have they had glandular fever? Just looking at all the different aspects of their life that maybe they haven't thought about and looking at...what could be a driver?

Could it be something viral that was in the system all those years ago? Is that stress still there? What environments have they lived in? Dental health, we know mould, dental, viruses, stress, all these things are drivers. I send them a three-day food diary so I know what they're eating. That's really important to see. And then just looking, also looking at all...all the different symptoms they're experiencing across different symptoms of their body.

So how is their liver? How are their hormones? How is their blood sugar? How is their gut? Like, you know, so many questions that you ask give you a clue as to what could be going on. And like sometimes like in a consultation, it can be like, well, why are you asking that? Because, you know, but it's amazing. Like just your bowel habits, right? Like your stool tells you so much information.



You know, that it's invaluable. So, you know, just getting all these clinical clues, you know, all these little clues in a consultation really helps you understand what's going on, what needs support.

You know, and then supporting the gut before, you know, supporting the gut, supporting the liver, supporting food intake, and then looking, you might do testing then to see what's actually going on in these other areas, you know, blood testing to look, you know, liver function, sugars, full blood count, all these things, always doing a stool test to actually see what's going on in the gut.

How is the digestion? How is the absorption? What's going on with inflammation? What is going on with the bacterial balance as well? And that's always like the first step because then you're setting a foundation, working on the gut, and it has a huge impact on everything. And for everyone, even if say the diagnosis is the same, if they have the same condition, it's always gonna be for a different reason.

No one has exactly the same, you know, root cause. It's so individualised. It's always trying to find out what's going on with someone, yeah.

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah. It's such an interconnected web, isn't it? And I'm sure a lot of the work that you do is just trying to connect dots.

**Farzanah Nasser**

100%. Yeah.

**Charlotte Mei**

And you know, you mentioned dental health, and that one really got me curious. What's the relationship between dental health and these conditions?

**Farzanah Nasser**

Your mouth is the beginning of the GI tract, right? So whatever happens in the mouth is gonna affect the gut. So you're swallowing loads of saliva every day, right? So any imbalances, any inflammation there is going to get into the gut. We have stomach acid in our stomach. So it is supposed to be killing any pathogens, any imbalances of bacteria to prevent it from going to the gut. But we know that as soon as you're stressed out, your stomach acid levels drop, considerably, right? So that you can't do those things. But yeah, no looking at the mouth is huge. So it can be a trigger for autoimmunity as well.

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah, that's fascinating. And that also just shows how interdisciplinary, or rather, how important it is to look at these different aspects of health. We can't just look at one. And interdisciplinary is, or an inter, I can't speak now, but an interdisciplinary approach is really important when it comes to finding out these issues. We also had another...

**Farzanah Nasser**

...yeah

**Charlotte Mei**

... yeah, go ahead.

**Farzanah Nasser**

I was just going to say also, it's not just, you know, you want to keep your oral cavity clean, but things like root canals, amalgams, they can all be drivers for other issues as well. So, you know, not just, it's not just about looking at your gut health, it's also ensuring that you're taking care of your oral health as well, and making sure there's no pockets of inflammation there that could be driving issues too.

And even with autoimmunity, we know the gut tear in the mouth, *P. gingivalis* —which causes gingivitis, we know there's associations with autoimmunity. So we know there's a link between that bacteria and RA, for example. And it's something that they test for when diagnosing RA is for a particular bacteria in the mouth that could be driving it. So they are, it's just, it is also really important to look at oral health, oral hygiene, support your oral microbiome as well.

**Charlotte Mei**

Wow fascinating, all these connections. Now, another question we got from our Instagram followers, and this one's on eczema. Now, the incidence of eczema in the Asian population is pretty high. You know, apparently twice that of Caucasians. And growing up, I remember so many friends having it in school and even through to adulthood.

So how can food help in this instance? And how much can it help?

**Farzanah Nasser**

With eczema, you're thinking, so there can definitely be a food allergy component. So, you know, gluten, dairy, sugar, those are the three biggest culprits with eczema. So it's always worth seeing, you know, trialling and see how you do without them. But a lot has to do with the gut. So I see like just supporting the gut, supporting digestion. Looking at the balance of microbes really helpful.

Also liver health, you know, I find, those are the three areas I find supporting with, if someone has eczema, food sensitivities, the gut and the liver can be really, really helpful. Like I say, it's different for each person. It's not like, you know, you have eczema, eradicate this, do this. There's no protocol, right? But those are three areas that you definitely wanna look at and support if there is eczema.

**Charlotte Mei**

And so for our listeners who suffer from eczema, what would you recommend them to do as a first step to find out more information on it?

**Farzanah Nasser**

There is, there's an elimination diet, which can be really helpful. So, um, if you Google elimination diet, that's usually the gold standard. With the food sensitivity desk, you can get like, they're not as accurate. So the best way to try to do it is a elimination diet and you will. There are so many available, but they're taking, you know, the problematic foods, eradicating them for, um, you know,

about a month and then three to four weeks and then you're reintroducing one every three to four days.

And then you're taking a note of any symptoms, how you feel and then, you know, you just keep reintroducing and that way you're able to find out any trigger foods. And then, yeah, it's the gold standard for food sensitivity.

**Charlotte Mei**

Right. And I received a lot of questions about, you know, gluten when it comes to eczema, you know, Hashimoto's as well. Is it the real culprit that people make it to be? What are your thoughts on that?

**Farzanah Nasser**

So yeah, so a lot of people can't, you can't, people can be, so with eczema, it's always worth excluding, taking gluten out and seeing how you respond to it. So that's definitely, and that's part of the elimination diet as well. It's one of those things you would take out. With Hashimoto's, there is a lot of studies that show that gluten is definitely an issue, but it's more adding fuel to the fire than actually driving the issue. So what happens is, it creates a picture of something called, I can't speak, sorry, molecular mimicry.

So this is when gluten looks similar to one of your organs and it causes destruction. So for example, if you have gluten and it has the amino acid sequence A, B, C, D, you can't break it down and then gluten gets into the bloodstream and your immune system goes to remove it from the bloodstream and creates antibodies against ABCD, which is exactly what it's supposed to do. It's supposed to remove ABCD from your body.

The only problem is your thyroid has the same amino acid sequence on it, ABCD. So that's where you can get that crossfire when it now starts to attack the thyroid instead of gluten. And that's called molecular mimicry.

So taking gluten out is really, really important to calm things down, but it's not gonna resolve the problem. But yeah, so you definitely with Hashimoto's, you do wanna take it out, but it's not gonna resolve it.

And there is some studies, well, with some people, so you've got two different kinds of antibodies with Hashimoto's. One is thyroperoxidase and one is thyroglobulin. So they say, some say that taking gluten out can help reduce the TPO antibodies, and it can, but it's only part of the picture, but it's an important part of the picture. Yeah.

**Charlotte Mei**

Gotcha. Yeah. Wow, that's fascinating.

The next one that I received a lot of questions from, and this is the last one here, it's about psoriasis. And you're someone who has faced it as well. What is the link with gut health, with food, et cetera? Would you give the same recommendations as earlier, which is to go on an elimination diet?

**Farzanah Nasser**

You can, absolutely. I mean, working on the gut is really important. Supporting the gut is really important. Pulling out any food sensitivities that you might have. So yeah, an elimination diet can be really helpful. Looking at the gut, working on the gut health can be really helpful. There are studies about viruses, and actually one virus called cytomegalovirus, there are studies that link that to psoriasis.

And that was the case with me as well. I had such high, I worked on the gut, I cleaned up my diet, but my psoriasis wasn't getting any better. And then I found for me, my viral load was through the roof. And as soon as I started working on that, that's when it just instantly cleared up. So it's the gut, you always have to look at that first, but then it can be other things. So, and viruses are implicated in psoriasis as well.

**Charlotte Mei**

And what was your journey like in sort of, you know, finding out, for example, your viral load? I mean, what got you even looking at that in the first place?

**Farzanah Nasser**

The psoriasis, like I felt really good. I got everything, you know, I had PCOS, I managed to reverse that. I had, you know, an ulcer, you know, imbalances in the gut, I managed to reverse all of that, but the psoriasis, and it got better. So I did the elimination diet, the psoriasis definitely got better, but it didn't disappear. And so I guess, you know, some people might be happy with that.

I was happy with that, but I knew there was still a missing link because it was still there. And so, you know, you dig a little deeper to see what else could be going on. And viruses are big players with autoimmunity as well. So the next thing I did was I did a viral panel and I found like huge levels. And as soon when I addressed that it improved, it cleared up completely...

**Charlotte Mei**

...Amazing.

**Farzanah Nasser**

...And, but like we said, like you can't cure an autoimmune condition. So my skin was great, it completely cleared. Then I got COVID and we know that can like, you know, shake things up a little bit.

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah, throw everything in the air.

**Farzanah Nasser**

Yeah, exactly. So it, you know, I had taken it into remission, I got COVID and emerged again. But then once you know what the driver is, you can, you know, I could get it back into remission again. But you know, even if you have a flare the second time, it's not always the initial trigger that will, you know, that you can bring it back into remission. Sometimes it can be something different. Luckily, it was a virus that triggered it again and then working on that brought it back into remission again.

But you know, you can't, like I say, you can't cure it, but you can bring it back into remission so that things are better.

### **Charlotte Mei**

Yeah, wow, interesting. Well, thanks so much for shedding light on that. I mean, one of my biggest takeaways from this conversation is the garlic hack. I'm definitely gonna let my garlic sit for a bit before I add them to my dishes now.

And just in the interest of time, I have one last question for you, Farzana. This is more of a fun one. Now, what's a dish that you haven't had for a while that you would love to have. Maybe something that reminds you of your childhood or it's a bit nostalgic...

### **Farzanah Nasser**

I love a shepherd's pie. Like I love a shepherd's pie. And I think I've been craving it just because it's so cold here right now. And it's something that everyone, the whole of my family will have. And it's also another really good example of how you can use food as medicine. Like just little hacks that you can incorporate into your food to make it so much more —easy hacks— to make it just so much more nourishing.

So I love shiitake mushrooms. So shiitake mushrooms are so great for immune health. My kids generally don't like mushrooms. They find them quite slimy. I don't have, so like they won't eat them. So I'd like to grind them up. Like I blitz dried shiitake mushrooms or even fresh in a blender. So they look like minced. So whether you're using, yeah. So they look like minced and add them to the base and you can't taste them, but they give the dish such a lovely earthy taste. And you get all that immune supporting goodness as well in that.

In the mashed potato, I like to do cauliflower in addition to potato. Always leave the skin on. I steam it and I'll always leave the skin on, but I do half cauliflower, half potato. I add some garlic into that and I mash it with bone broth. So you've got so many immune, you know, just little things like that. You know, when you make the shepherd's pie using three kinds of onions in the base, so like a red onion, a yellow onion, a shallot, so you've got three different plant foods, supporting your gut immune health. You've got the shiitake mushrooms supporting immune health. You've got all those plant points in the mash.

### **Charlotte Mei**

From everything you've listed out, I've counted seven plant foods already. So, and I'm sure it doesn't stop there. So there you go with just one dish and you have, you know, that many plant foods in there. So, you know, this is definitely a message. Yeah. You know, a message to our listeners as well to just see how many plant foods you can add to a dish.

You know, I like to add lentils into my shepherd's pie as well from time to time. Yeah, just to swap out some of the meat and just increase the plant points. Yeah.

### **Farzanah Nasser**

Or even just make it a lentil shepherd's pie. It doesn't have to be like a meat one. You can just do like a vegan one like that, which is so nourishing.

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah, yeah, and the lentils will be a good source of protein as well.

**Farzanah Nasser**

Yeah.

Charlotte Mei

Yeah, awesome.

Well, you know, hopefully you can make some shepherd's pie sometime this week to warm up your tummy.

**Farzanah Nasser**

Yeah haha

**Charlotte Mei**

How cold is it there right now?

**Farzanah Nasser**

Ooh, it's cold. I don't know the actual temperature. It's cold, but it's nice. It's like, it's very cold, but it's really nice as well. Like it's quite fresh when you go for a walk, but you definitely need like your jacket, your hat and your scarf.

**Charlotte Mei**

Yeah, well look, I see some sunlight streaming through your window, so that's a good sign. I mean, what we don't like is just those gloomy and grey days. Yeah.

Farzana, thank you so much for your time. I learned so much from our chat, and I'm sure our followers have done so as well. And I will look out for your recipe on stewed apples.

**Farzanah Nasser**

I will get that to you. Thank you for having me and it's been like fun talking to you. Thank you.

**Charlotte Mei**

Awesome. Thank you.

That was such a good chat and like I promised earlier on in the episode, there are lots of easy and practical tips that you can start doing at home for your general health, whether or not you have an autoimmune condition.

I hope that this episode has been helpful for those of you seeking answers and that you feel more empowered in your day to day decisions.

Don't forget to rate the show so that we can keep bringing in content that you all can enjoy and for more nutrition content, follow me on social media and subscribe to my weekly newsletter, you can find all links to that in the show notes.

See you in the next one!