

## VIDEO\_ Diet Doctor Podcast with Dan Scholnick (Episode 17)

**Dr. Bret Scher:** Welcome to the DietDoctor podcast with Dr. Bret Scher. Today I'm joined by Dan Scholnick from Trinity Ventures. Now this is a little bit of a different guest because he's involved in venture capital. But what makes him such a great guest is he has his own personal journey like so many of us, but he started off as a kid with hypercholesterolemia and he's going to tell you about his story.

He's also had problems with energy and fatigue then came across this guy named Dave Asprey as a budding entrepreneur, but didn't buy into the low-carb scene until he heard Gary Taubes speak. And then all of a sudden he became a fan of low-carb.

So what I loved talking to Dan about was not only his personal journey but then how he transitioned as to an investor in Bulletproof, which has its positives and negatives and we talk about both sides of the company but also what that means in terms of his vision for what Silicon Valley's role is in health investment, what their role is in trying to find the next big thing.

So we talk about lab grown meat, we talk about hydroponic vegetables, we talk about trying to make agriculture more productive and more efficient and we try and tie it all in to get his perspective on just what his role is, what Silicon Valley's role is and what we as the general population can hope to get out of Silicon Valley and health in the future.

So I hope you find this an interesting and a little bit different interview that you still come away with some great little pearls to learn and kind of help you understand this world a bit better. So enjoy this interview with Dan Scholnick from Trinity Ventures.

Dan Scholnick, welcome to the DietDoctor podcast and thanks for joining me today.

**Dan Scholnick:** Thanks for inviting me.

**Bret:** So we were talking a little bit off-line and I didn't realize how great of a candidate to interview you are. I was looking for the business side of the low-carb world and I came across you because you had a personal history with low-carb and are involved in the business and investment side of low-carb.

But it goes even deeper than that; you've got familial hypercholesterolemia, you're a hyper-responder... these are hot, hot topics. So I look forward to discussing all this with you today. So if you could start give us a little background on your first experiences with low carb, and maybe how that transitioned into an investment strategy.

**Dan:** It's started... in 2010. I mean actually, the story goes back to when I was 10 years old. I mean that's when it really started. And that was when... It was probably around that time, so this is in 80's, that... Me and my younger sister were diagnosed with high cholesterol which ran in the family. And, I was told... And this is important context... We were put on drugs, cholesterol lowering medication back then. You're giving me a surprised look, but yes, yes. And I think back to that, "Oh, my God what were we?"

**Bret:** It must have been Mevacor, that was the only statin...

**Dan:** It wasn't the statin, we were taking... Questran.

**Bret:** Oh, wow! **Dan:** Which like, getting like a 10 or 12 year old to put that powder in your-- Thick, it has this tick... We mixed it in orange juice.

**Bret:** You mixed it up and drink it.

**Dan:** We mixed it in orange juice, I mean... God it's like that, just like thinking about that, taste is coming back in my mouth and I want to vomit, sorry. And we were told to follow a very strict diet. And you can guess--

**Bret:** Low fat? High carb?

**Dan:** Yes, so I was told less than 10g of saturated fat a day. There was nothing said about carbs, it was just don't eat fat, right?

**Bret:** Right.

**Dan:** Or cholesterol... So, no eating cholesterol, no eating fat.

**Bret:** But eat anything else you want?

**Dan:** Eat anything else you want so I was like a kid and it was like, "Oh, this piece of bread doesn't have any fat or cholesterol, so I can go to town, and have a bread, or like these gummy bears." "They don't have fat or cholesterol, so I can go to town"... And there were all those cookies that they came out with back then, they didn't have fat, but had--

**Bret:** Like Snack Well's.

**Dan:** Yes, Snack Well's and... Anyway, fast forward like 2010... Here's the general partner at Trinity Ventures and we invited this guy, who had worked in one of our portfolio companies in the past, to come be an entrepreneur and residence with us. And this is somebody who is transitioning in their career.

They hang with us for a while, while we helped them find the next thing they're going to do. And that guy was Dave Asprey. Dave would walk around our office, with plates... Like a plate of food that would have a stick of butter, a pile of smoked salmon, and like an avocado. And when we were all eating our sandwiches for lunch Dave would be sitting there like chowing down on a stick of butter.

**Bret:** And you looked at that and said, "I'm having a heart attack just watching you."

**Dan:** Exactly.

**Bret:** That was your mind set.

**Dan:** I would literally make fun of him. It's like "You're crazy man, what are you doing? What is this? Nobody eats a stick of butter." I mean finally I gave him... Finally one day I was feeling really bad about it. And I went over to his office and I said, "Dave, why don't we schedule some time to sit down, and you can tell me what this thing you're doing is all about?"

And like "Why you're walking around with the stick of butter all the time?" That was my first introduction to low-carb; We actually set in the conference room and he walked me through all of it. And my respond was "This is insanity." And I mean, you can understand this because...

**Bret:** Because the way you were brought up, and the way you've talked with doctors, over and over again.

**Dan:** Yes, exactly, I mean it's a common story for all of us. It's hard to unlearn 30 years or 40 years of training or brain washing, or propaganda or whatever you want to call it.

**Bret:** It's the same for doctors as it is for everyday people.

**Dan:** Absolutely. It's just... At that time Dave was running a non-profit here in the bay area. And the next day, they were running an event. And this guy named Gary Taubes was giving a talk.

**Bret:** I've heard of him.

**Dan:** And so, Dave said like, "Don't believe me if you don't want to, just do me one favor." He said "I want you to come to this event tomorrow night." And I went and I saw Gary speak, and it just blew my mind. The work that he had done. This was probably around the time of Good Calories, Bad Calories.

And I started thinking what if everything that I was told about what was good for me to eat and bad for me to eat and what was going on with my cholesterol was based on faulty science? And I've been taking these drugs for decades. Could this be doing damage to me?

**Bret:** It was really awakening?

**Dan:** It was a very powerful moment. And I went down the rabbit hole. I like to think I am sophisticated enough not to get hoodwinked by charismatic people, so I wanted to do my own research. And so I read every Gary had written, and then I read all of the rebuttals to Gary's work. Like then I ended up with the China study...

And I read China study, and I read all rebuttals to the China story. So, I went... My point is I went deep. And after doing a lot of research I came to conclusion that... And this is 8 years ago. But, like that there were still lot that we didn't know. That ideas in the science that Gary and Dave and other folks in the community were talking about was on the right side of the history.

**Bret:** So, were you able to then say, "Okay, I'm buying in, and I'm jumping in and I'm going to go for this low carb life style"? Or was there still so much trepidation that you sort of like just had to dip your foot in the water first before you could jump in, because of... You know, sort of governor in your brain say, "No, remember what you've been taught."

**Dan:** Yes, I mean there was a little bit of everything. The thing that Dave convinced me to do was to run experiments. And Dave was... I mean Dave is still a biohacker. But you know, he was early biohacker and that's how he approaches everything. And what he convinced me of...

You know, and what I became convinced after I did all this research was that we do have a lot of tools available to us to change the way that we're feeling and different attributes of our lives. Some of the science is still pretty early... So, you have to experiment. Because there's not necessarily one-size-fits-all. So, what Dave convinced me to do was start experimenting. So, the first thing I've experimented was like what happens if I just cut out carbs all together?

And yes it was... Like, for the first month when I sat there, like looking at the plate of eggs and bacon and, you know, a cup of coffee with butter in it... Every time I went

to eat that stuff, I just had this feeling like I am killing myself right now. And that's why I totally empathize with people who are trying to change their diet and lifestyle in any way. Because that conditioning is so ingrained, that's very hard to change.

**Bret:** Yes, psychologically I could see how that was very challenging for you, but I read how physically, it was actually pretty beneficial for you. This history of chronic fatigue, I mean always feeling tired and down and that started to improve. Is that the case of how long did take you to start to improve and how did that impact your psychological barrier once you've started to feel better physically?

**Dan:** Just a give a little bit more context. I mean, energy issues were something that I had dealt with from a very young age. Just feeling tired all the time. And to the point where it was extreme enough, that... that other people noticed. It only came to my awareness, you know, maybe when I was in middle school or something like that or in high school when the teacher said...

Pulled me aside and said, "You know Dan you seem tired all the time." Like "What's up with that? Maybe you should try exercising." You know, I don't want to say that it was the low-carb diet by itself that helped me feel a lot better from an energy perspective and helped kind of reduce the amount of fatigue that I feel every day. It's still something I struggle with today, but it's a lot better than it used to be.

But it was that concept that Dave introduced to me, of bio hacking and experimenting. And that sent me down. You know, I started with this path of trying low-carb, and trying to figure out what that would do to my cholesterol, my lipid profile. And then I started to think what else could I start to experiment around?

That became an energy issue; I noticed how low-carb was helping energy, I've started introducing supplements. I started making other life style modifications. You know, at that time I was using a Zeo, which was a sleep monitor that was the very best on the market, at that time. So, I could see what was happening during my sleep cycle, I was experimenting with energy, I was keeping detailed logs of everything about how I felt.

I mean, it was a lot of work, I don't want to lie about that. What came out the other end was transformational. For the first time in my life I had days where I didn't feel any fatigue at all. That alters your reality in a really profound way. And you know, it was very emotional. I even get emotional right now, like just thinking about what that transformation was like, because it really changes you.

**Bret:** Yes. That's true what I was getting with the question because we do have this big population now, this community of hyper responders, and one thing that's fairly consistent among them is they almost all say, "Yes, but I feel so good. My LDL is up, but I feel so good." And that can help reframe your psychology.

If you felt awful doing it, or you didn't feel any better doing it, it would be a non-issue. But it's because people feel so good with this life style and they see so many other benefits that makes it hard to want to change. So, I guess that's where I was going with you, if that impacted your psychology of looking at eggs, and bacon and your butter in your coffee. But now it sounds like that wasn't a long term solution for you.

**Dan:** Well, yes. By the way, I think there is maybe left out the context from our offline discussion which was that I am a hyper responder. Which means that when I go on a high fat diet, my LDL-C and my LDL-P rise substantially. And it's not clear and I am happy to get into the details of this, but my case is not clear whether that's good or bad.

I will say that... What makes it difficult is that-- What makes this whole thing challenging for me in figuring out what's the right thing for me to do is that I do feel better on the low-carb diet. But it's unclear what the impact on the lipid side of this is in terms of whether it's good or bad.

And am I doing more harm or less harm? So, what I'm doing now is experimenting with different diets to see what kind of tradeoffs I can make in terms of what's happening in my lipid profile versus how I'm feeling.

**Bret:** Okay, that makes sense.

**Dan:** At the end of the day, if you put a gun on my head I'll probably say rather feel better more at that time, and risk the high LDL-C and LDL-P than walk around feeling tired and depressed all the time.

**Bret:** Yes, that's a great perspective. That's something that I deal with a lot with the clients I see, and a number of people in this hyper responder community. It's the tradeoff of feeling great for something that some people say might be detrimental down the road. But we actually really don't know. But we don't have reassurance to know it's safe a 100% either. And that's interesting place to be in. I could talk to you about this all day long.

**Dan:** Yes I guess if I can just interject for a second. I think everybody has to make... Every individual has to make their own decision on this matter. Because we just don't have all the science here, we don't have all the information. And so I think it's their responsibility of anybody who is a hyper responder to become informed and so that that they can make an informed decision and try to tradeoff the risks. Whatever path they choose.

**Bret:** Absolutely, yes. So rewinding to meeting Dave Asprey, going to the talk with Gary Taubes, then all of a sudden you put your money where your mouth is, literally, and made an investment in Bulletproof.

**Dan:** It's a great story. I don't know how much there is to learn from it. But we obviously here at Trinity we have a deep relationship with Dave. And he really opened up our eyes to this trend that was on the right side of history. And in the meantime, and I think it was probably in 2010 that he bought this domain, web domain [bulletproofexact.com](http://bulletproofexact.com).

And he and Lana, his wife, were publishing The Better Baby Book. And then he started blogging about his biohacking journey at [bulletproofexact.com](http://bulletproofexact.com), and by that time Dave had really become my health and wellness Guru, or mentor. And I started becoming a bit of a business coach to Dave, because what was happening is the traffic to his website was building.

And Bulletproof is an amazing story because it just kind of grew organically from that. You know, he was working another job at the time, and... But more and more people were coming to the website and they started asking him for products. And so he started referring them to other companies to buy things. He started making some money off of affiliate sales, and then he started thinking, you know, "I could make better products than what I'm referring people to."

And so he started making his own products. So this whole time over the course of years, you know, it was like the snowball rolling down the hill getting bigger and bigger. It got to a point where Bulletproof has become a substantial company, and Dave decided to quit his job and focus on it full time. And also decided that he needed to raise capital to facilitate expenditure of the business and obviously I had watched.

I have seen that he was doing all of that because of our relationship. So it was very natural-- Even though this is not what I typically invest in, we're talking earlier about how I mostly invest in deep technologies like cloud computing and other infrastructure software that's probably not interesting to your audience. You know, we felt compelled to invest in Bulletproof.

**Bret:** And at the same time this was happening in an atmosphere where I think it was you who said every investor in Silicon Valley is on some sort of a low-carb diet. Like, it was low-carb was sort of taking Silicon Valley by storm. And I find it curious, you know, how people can say "I think this is going to be the next big thing to invest in?"

Especially something like Bulletproof or like we were talking about something like a fasting mimicking diet, or basically things that people can do on their own. They don't

require a product to do it. But yet in some cases it seems a worthy investment to invest in a company, just to do it a little bit better or a little bit more convenient for something that's a hot topic.

And obviously as you said, you thought it was on the right side of history, so you expected this to just take off, both as a low-carb community, low-carb trend, low-carb movement, and this specific product. But was there a little bit of concern that like anybody can put a slab of butter in their coffee? Why do I want to invest in a company that's promoting something that's so simple to do?

**Dan:** Yes. Absolutely. And by the way, there was a lot of controversy around our investment in Bulletproof in every aspect of it? And you know, we had vigorous debates within our partnership here, about putting money in, and even some of our investors... after we made the investment they looked and scratched their head and said "Okay, these guys at Trinity have just gone off the rails."

Like "We don't know what they're doing." Because, you know even this was I think in 2014 that we first invested and the world has changed a lot even since 2014, right? This was leading edge stuff, and kind of crazy stuff four years ago. You know, people are not surprised anymore when you start talking about low-carb. It's much bigger than it was.

Even though I personally haven't invested in a lot of consumer retail companies, Trinity has a long history of doing it. And we were first investors in Starbucks, for example. And you could say the exact same thing about Starbucks. It's... They're just selling coffee. I mean, anybody else can make coffee. Bulletproof is selling coffee with some butter and some oil, anybody can do that. Why invest in Bulletproof? Ultimately, this is going to maybe sound like a weird answer to you and maybe you'll find it unsatisfying I don't know, but...

With lot of these companies it's not what we're not investing... We're not investing in the product, we're investing in the brand. Which is really about the trust that the company has built with its consumer audience. People went and go to Starbucks, because they trust that when they go to Starbucks they're going to have a certain experience and get a certain quality coffee. And in the space that the market that Bulletproof is in, which is in this kind of leading edge health and wellness area. There is a lot of FUD out there, there are lot of snake oil salesmen...

**Bret:** Absolutely.

**Dan:** There is a lot of bad products. And it's a confusing landscape, they were only in the beginning of... On the learning curve of understanding. And so you know, what Dave did effectively at Bulletproof was to build a brand that became a trusted source



of guidance and information about how to achieve a higher level of human performance.

And so when you look at Bulletproof you can trust, and our consumers trust that the coffee that they're getting from us for example, that coffee beans are high quality. And that the oils are what we say they are. And they differentiate it, and they're also looking for the advice on how do I just make sense of all of these complexities? What should I do? So that's the brand experience that we're investing in. It's not about-- because you're right... You could go out tomorrow, and start a coffee company. That's not hard. But, you know, why--?

**Bret:** What's going to differentiate you from all the others?

**Dan:** And that brand... I mean look at what a big company Starbucks has become, we invested in it in 1989.

**Bret:** I guess that worked pretty well for you guys.

**Dan:** Yes, that worked out great. But that brand, that relationship with the customer is durable. And it ends up being a source of competitive advantage.

**Bret:** Interesting. Yes, you know, Bulletproof for all that it is, also has a lot of detractors and people who frown upon it. You know, some claims have been made that could be hard to defend, that you know, all you have to do is drink this coffee and you're going to start burning fat right away. Or you can boost your IQ 20 points.

I mean there is a... There is a point where you can't get across the line, as you said there is a lot of snake oil out there, and even if it's a good product, you can over promote it to a degree. Maybe a tough question for you to answer but is there any concern about crossing that line with the company?

**Dan:** I mean this is something we think about and talk about in board meetings all the time. First principles for me and for us investing in the company were that, you know, we did our own research as I described, I went down the rat hole on this stuff. And came to the conclusion that the work that Dave and the team Bulletproof did on the scientific side, the work that they were doing was sound.

You know based on the best available information that was out there. And the products really were, you know, what the company says they are. I don't want to give a compound answer but some of this is hard. Because you're trying to change the world, like there is really, you know a mission, I think behind Bulletproof and even what you're doing right? Even with this podcast and Diet Doctor and whatnot, we're trying to help people get healthier.

You know, there is a profit motive too, but it's almost secondary to the greater mission. And if you want to reach the most people possible, you want to do it in like easiest language, with the clearest communication that they can understand, something that Dave is really good at. And I love Gary Taubes for example. But normal human beings can-- Aren't going to consume the book Good Calories-Bad Calories, right?

**Bret:** It's a joke... how thick it is!

**Dan:** And what he does is so important but that's not going to become mainstream, right? So, I think some of this is, you're trying to figure out... And he's written books since, I think he got that feedback and he's written books since then that are more easily digestible by mainstream audience but you know, part of it is... I think there is some experimentation that Bulletproof has had to do to figure out what the right communication style is.

And then frankly, I mean if I'm just being honest, you know the early days of company was a little bit of the wild west, right? It wasn't built intentionally with the business in mind. It was this thing that kind of built up organically. And there was this team of people spread out all over the country that were working on with Dave right? So, I think if you look at the company, it's much more professionalized today. And that's part of what I came with our investment in the company. And so that's part of what we're trying to do.

**Bret:** Yes, you've clearly built a big community. As with anything though, it gets maybe misinterpreted in the general sphere. Like you can't eat your high carb diet and drink a Bulletproof coffee and think you're going to be burning fat and be healthy. Like it doesn't work that way. But yet sometimes that's the way that people interpret the message;

And you know frequently when someone comes with a high cholesterol, or they're not losing weight on a low-carb diet, the first thing you have to do is to take them off that Bulletproof coffee. So it's not all roses, but it's got its place... And I guess the point is that the marketing sometimes can confuse that. But that's business right?

**Dan:** Yes, and it's just... Part of what's hard about this is how much complexity there is in all of these stuff. You know we're talking about that beforehand. We're trying to change, you know, very complex human systems, and most people are not going to have the time or motivation to get into the weeds of it as you've done, or I've done or you know, Peter Attia's done at even more extreme level, right?

And so you know, I guess another way of looking at it is, let's say somebody is drinking Bulletproof coffee, but they still eat lots of carbs and they're not losing weight. But

let's say that Bulletproof coffee is making them feel like a million bucks in the morning, and they didn't feel like a million bucks before. That's... It's a win.

And if nothing else maybe it's starting to get them down this journey, this path of realizing that the food they eat, the lifestyle they live actually does have an impact on how they feel. And maybe some of them then want more of that. And they're willing to go work with folks like you. And look like, we'll take that win. Right?

**Bret:** Yes.

**Dan:** Because it's moving people in the right direction.

**Bret:** But then there is a broader concept of this what's next in this market, in this sphere? And you know, there are supplements 30 billion dollars in United States alone, and talk about the wild west and snake oil, and like no limitations on what you can say and what you can promote. I mean that's sort of a dangerous area, but now a Silicon Valley is getting more involved in that as well.

**Dan:** Just, I'm using a startup right now that makes custom supplements based on your genetic profile and like that. So, I'm just validating that, yes this stuff is going on. I'll try anything, so I'll try these things and see how it goes.

**Bret:** So, the N of 1 experimenter, but it's much harder to say yes take this, it's going to improve your brain function, it's going to make you a super human, when again it's sort of falls back on, get regular exercise, get sun exposure, get plenty of sleep, eat a good diet, and that's going to do the heavy lifting.

You can take whatever supplements you want, if you're not doing those things, it's not going to make a difference. But, what do you see as the next thing on the horizon for health related VC investments we're going to be talking about in 6 months from now?

**Dan:** One thing that jumps to mind, which I think people are already talking about is the psychological side of all of this. And there's been a lot of investment in meditation apps, and other types of programs, I think we have one in our portfolio called 10% Happier which perhaps you've heard of. You know, we just invested in this very early stage company that's helping people better manage their marital relationships or you know relationships with their life partners.

I think people like you and me spend a lot of time talking about the science and the drugs and the supplements and the diets and all those kinds of things, but there is a mental health aspect of this too that is also related to diet, and supplements and drugs and all of those kinds of things but it's also something that can be worked on

independently. And I think that startups that are working in those areas are seeing tremendous demand.

There is still stigmas attached to... Thinking, you know, doing things about mental health, going see therapist, meditating things like that. And a fact that now you can do these things on your mobile phone, in the privacy of your own home, it kind of changes the game. You know I know fasting is something that you've brought up...

You know a lot of the communities are interested in that, it definitely seems, from what I understand of the science, which is still pretty rudimentary, but there is some strong evidence that there is health benefits to fasting so we funded a very early stage company that helps folks with fasting programs. So there is a types of things, you know, those are certainly the types of things that are coming up.

**Bret:** Yes, I can see that's going to... Fasting is fascinating because how can you make money off of telling people not to eat? You're not selling anything. You're taking something away, so it's more about like the community and the coaching and helping people through as--

**Dan:** Yes it's no different than the meditation programs for example which is-- I mean in theory with all of these stuff, you can do it on your own right? Like I can go buy coffee, put butter in it, buy some MCT oil, stick it in blender, right? I don't need somebody to do that for me. I can sit in the corner of the room here, close my eyes and I can meditate.

**Bret:** The question is will you?

**Dan:** Yeah, so a lot of these things, some of it is education, and a lot of it is really about convenience and behavioral change. And having support when you're doing those things will help. I mean think about why Weight Watcher is such a big business. You can go on a diet, you can count your calories. But Weight Watcher is a big business because it's actually-- there is value to have somebody who help you go on that diet program.

**Bret:** And then you can get in all back later. That's another story.

**Dan:** Right, right.

**Bret:** So, what are the other hot topics it seems like in terms of the future of nutrition and health and venture capital is fake meat, lab grown meat. Tyson Ventures led a \$2.2 million round for an Israeli based future meat technology. Cargyle and Tyson invested in Memphis Meat. Which is right here in Silicon Valley, lab grown meat.

And Merck, the drug company Merck, led an \$8.8 million round for Mosa Meat, which is now a Pharma backed lab cultured meat and Bill Gates, and Richard Branson are all getting on board. Although at the present moment a pound of self-cultured meat takes 24.000 dollars to make basically. Oh, man, this subject has so many different things.

One: the cost endpoint. Two: what are we actually eating, what's actually in it? And three: this is based on the fact that you know, concept that meat is bad and horrible for the environment which is a very sort of kind of dumb down argument without a lot of nuance. But then it seems to be hot, and people are investing in it.

So, how do you kind of incorporate all that and say as an investor, is this something that is going to take off, and something where you'd want to back?

**Dan:** Yes. Well, I mean part of the Silicon Valley is always chasing the next big idea. It does appear that there is, you know, the world is going to be facing a big challenge with meat consumption if we don't figure this out, in some way as...

And I hear you that it's nuanced and whatnot, but as more of the world gets lifted out of poverty and more people start eating meat and then more people start demanding high quality, healthy, clean meat, we'll have to find new ways to support that kind of infrastructure, because the type of farming that's being done today is not sustainable.

And so I think that the investors looking at this, the entrepreneurs starting these companies are... You know that's what they're going after. This is a big idea, because this is a huge challenge that the world is facing and whoever can solve this problem, could stand to both...

You know, do a lot of good in the world and make a lot of money at the same time, and who wouldn't want to do that, right? I think that there would be a lot of consensus that if you could build a company that could make grown meat in a low cost, sustainable way, that company would be very valuable. So, we all agree that would be... If I could put a dollar in that today, some day in a future I might get millions of dollars out.

That's very exciting. It's just a question of when. Is that two years from now? Or is that 10 or 15, or 20 years from now? And this is where you're getting to some of the art of investing and not the science, because nobody has that perfect crystal ball to say these things will work in two years. You know our best guess right now is that it is further out on the time scale, you know in the 5 to 10 year type of time frame not the, you know zero to five type of year time frame.

But until these things become really commercially available at the price point and a quality level, that is going to make you buy XYZ lab grown meat instead of, you know the grass fed rib-eye from your local sustainable farm. So, you know we think it's further out. So, when we make that assessment we'll wait. So we haven't made an investment in that area.

**Bret:** Yes, I mean, I think the comparison that you've made is good. So I have to say, let's find ways to get more of the local grass feed farm; Let's find more ways to improve the way we raise ruminants and bring them to market. And let's find ways to improve that productivity and with regenerative agriculture help nature rather than herd it.

But that's sort of harder sell because that's not technology, that's not as easily scalable, that's not as change the world type of mentality I think. And that's where why I think Silicon Valley focuses more on the lab culture meats maybe and less on the sort of the real meat.

**Dan:** For sure. I mean but to-- You know, either make an excuse or explain Silicon Valley a little bit... It's our job here to fund the wacky, crazy big ideas that might not work. I mean that is the business model of Silicon Valley. If you look at a venture fund like ours, most of our companies are not going to work. We're either going to-- we're probably going to lose our money. We might be lucky to get it back. But then one of those companies is Starbucks. And nothing else you did, matters. Right?

**Bret:** Right.

**Dan:** And so you know if one of these lab growing meat companies works, and achieves the potential that the investors and founders think you can be, it was a risk worth taking. Or something in their portfolio does that that it was you know that basket of risk made sense. There are other types of businesses, like what you've just described that deserve funding...

They will get it from other places just not Silicon Valley. It's not our job in the world. And I think that's okay. There is a lot of criticism in Silicon Valley, and you know, I get why, but it's we are not the only source of funding in the world. We are a specific source of funding for specific type of company and idea, and it's a big world that's in Washington capital.

And so there are other ways to get the kind of sustainable farming that we've funded. It's not what Silicon Valley is built to do.

**Bret:** Yes, but wouldn't be great if Silicon Valley got into that? Wouldn't that help so much more?

**Dan:** Look I'm a believer in specialization, right? And maybe it will be great if, like a farming area... maybe the Central Valley in California should get really into that. And I think money from Silicon Valley does end up out in those places, and there is a lot of people in Silicon Valley who invest money in these types of causes, or donate money to these types of causes. But I don't think it's Silicon Valley's responsibility to do everything.

**Bret:** I guess that make sense, yes.

**Dan:** I mean, look that's just my point of view, but it's a big country, like, you know?

**Bret:** And Silicon Valley is not one place either. It's so many different companies and so many different mindsets.

**Dan:** And what we know it's tech, right? We don't know farming but there are lots of people out there that really know farming.

**Bret:** Yes. I think it's interesting that Merck made such a big investment because that almost from a publicity stand point sounds awful. They have a pharmaceutical company involved in making your meat. I mean that doesn't sound very good. And it brings up the questions of like regulations. How do you regulate this? Is this a food, is it a drug, is it a supplement... what is it?

I think that's going to be something that can really impact whether investors see return on their capital or not, depending on how this is regulated and who regulates it. And if you have any insight of that, is not really..

**Dan:** I mean, if I did-- I mean I don't know how you would have insight into that because there is so many unknowns there. I don't invest in this area, so I don't know if the government is looking at it but...

You know when we're making investments like this, we list all the risks, and then we look at what the reward could be if it works, right? And then everyone has to make their own judgment does that risk-- sorry does that reward justify all the risks you're taking? I mean everything you're saying is legitimated.

**Bret:** Is there something similar around like hydroponic vegetables that doesn't get as much news attention and other things, but are you aware of any big startups around that?

**Dan:** Yes, I mean I've seen a couple of startups that are doing agriculture, plant based agriculture in shipping containers for example.

**Bret:** And there's Elon Musk's brother I think is doing some of that.

**Dan:** Yes, there is a few companies doing that. And I, you know that to me seems like a great idea. Less risky than doing lab growing meat because you're not changing the biology; You're still growing plants, but... I mean you're just growing plants like we always have, you're just doing it at a higher density.

And just resource intensity of the current agricultural system is huge. I forget what percentage of the world's land is dedicated to agriculture, but it's huge. I mean it's price something like, I'm making up numbers now, but I mean it's probably something like 60-70% or something like that. Maybe if the places that have been like habitable land or something like that. And even if it's 20% or 30%, it's huge.

**Bret:** Right it's still like... and what that is doing to the land is awful.

**Dan:** Exactly.

**Bret:** Destroying the soil.

**Dan:** And using all these resources like in California for example, there is this constant fight between the Central Valley and the coastal cities about water. And so what these farms inside of shipping containers are doing is making hyper efficient low resource intensity version of farming. So I met one company that could grow as many strawberries in shipping containers, you could grow something like 3000 acres of land.

And then part of that is because soil depletion and you have to move crops around and things like that, so you can only use sections over the time. And then they can do it here around 24/7 and you can stack these things vertically. So I think that there are some really cool ideas there.

I think whether their work is businesses, is hard to say, but I'm glad people are taking those risks, making those bets.

**Bret:** Yes, changes the resource, it makes it more you know, lights and electricity resource as opposed to land resource and mono cropping is definitely not good for the country.

**Dan:** And it's even more... I mean it's a more complex and nuanced than even that, because the water usage for example is a lot more efficient.

**Bret:** You can recycle the use of the water.

**Dan:** Exactly, yes, yes.

**Bret:** And to evaporate as much. **Dan:** Exactly. **Bret:** And by the way I feel awful that I called Kimbal Musk Elon Musk's brother, I have to crack myself. He's got a name



he's got his own thing, he stands on his own two feet. That was not respectful of me to say, but anyway... All right, now I've got to ask you about something. I've read that you've started a bagel company called Schmendricks is that right?

**Dan:** Yes, I did.

**Bret:** So, this guy who has a low-carb journey started a bagel company?

**Dan:** I'm into low-carb, here are my bagels. So I've started... We, my wife and a couple of friends and I started this business, I forget what year. But you know, we started it because you live on the west coast. I'm guessing you hear this in San Diego all the time, but the common refrain in San Francisco is there are no good bagels in San Francisco.

**Bret:** All the East Coast say that. That just goes in one ear not the other for me.

**Dan:** For East Coasters and I'm from the Boston area. And our friends we did this with are from New York. We're lamenting the fact that there are no good bagels, and there are all these theories... "It's the water, it's..." So we set out to prove that you could make a high quality bagel in San Francisco.

There was nothing special about New York, and so we actually manage to reverse engineer our favorite New York bagel and sell it very successfully here in San Francisco. And the business was thriving. My wife who was primarily running it because I'm otherwise employed as venture capitalist shut it down for really two reasons. I mean, one it was during this period that we met Dave, we started to experiment with low-carb lifestyle and the low-carb diet.

And you know we did start to have some serious concerns that the products we were selling even though they were really delicious, were not healthy for folks. More importantly, my wife discovered-- see this is interesting... she discovered she had a gluten allergy.

But it's like until you start learning about all these stuff, you don't really know. It was just something that she-- Like my fatigue was part of my life... I didn't know any other reality. She didn't know any other reality except feeling some like GI distress when she ate. It's just for her was eating, just for me like existing was being tired.

And so Dave and low-carb and all this opened up our eyes to this idea that, you know, what you put in your body really matters. And it's complex, and we should experiment. So we discovered this thing. So that's ultimately why we ended up. She decided to shut the business down.

**Bret:** Which is incredible responsible because I think maybe 95% of businessmen and business women would say, "If this is a thriving business health be darned, let's keep making money." I mean it's a difference between being a business person and being a socially responsible business person. So, I think that makes a great story and happy ending.

**Dan:** Yes, I guess. I don't want to say that bagels are socially irresponsible. I don't want to end with that message. I think like, you know like a bagel, an occasional bagel is... If it's a good bagel it's probably not the end of the world.

**Bret:** Well now can you produce a New York quality keto bagel? That would be the question. **Dan:** We have talked about that. We can't imagine how that would be possible.

**Bret:** Okay. It's worth it though.

**Dan:** If we can do it, if we can find the way, I promise you we will.

**Bret:** All right, very good I will definitely keep my eyes open for that. Well, Dan, this has been a great talk, I really enjoyed it. Any other last words? If people want to learn more about you, where can they find you and get in touch with you?

**Dan:** My profile is at the Trinity Venture website which is just [TrinityVentures.com](http://TrinityVentures.com). I'm pretty easy to get in touch with, but I got a lot of e-mails, so, best way to get in touch with me is to find someone who knows me. So look on LinkedIn because I'm pretty well connected, so you can usually find a way in.

And you know I think the only thought I'd leave is just going back to something we talked earlier, which is that... You know, what I've learned to all of this is you can really... This stuff is important, low-carb is important, but more importantly is this concept that we can actually use diet and other lifestyle modifications to improve the way we feel, improve our health, improve our longevity. It's very real.

And I would encourage anyone who has interest in it and going down the journey, and viewing it as a journey of exploration and learning.

**Bret:** Yes, I like that you say that that is exploration, it's learning and self-experimentation and finding out what's right for you. Because you have the perfect history of someone with high cholesterol, familial hypercholesterolemia, a hyper responder, who could easily say, "Forget it, this is not the way for you."

But yet, if you look a little more individually say, well maybe there is something that you can get out of this that will make it worth it for you. And you're not going to get that from a text book, you're not going to get that from a doctor who doesn't see

people as an individual. I think you're perfect example for that. Thank you for sharing your story and for sharing all your knowledge with us today.

**Dan:** Thank you for having me.