

Kris Carr Interviews Laurie David, Producer of Fed Up

Kris Carr: Hey everybody welcome back. I'm so excited today. I have a very special guest. Her name is Laurie David. She is the producer of the new film "Fed Up", which she produced with Katie Couric. She's also the academy award winning producer of "An Inconvenient Truth" and the author of so many amazing books including this new cookbook, which we're going to talk about later, called *The Family Cooks: 100+ recipes to get your family creating food that's simple, tasty and incredibly good for you*. Welcome, Laurie.

Laurie David: Thank you very much for having me. I feel like I'm in your living room!

KC: You are in my living room and I've never had an Academy Award-winning producer in my living room! So I want to talk about your documentary first because it's still in the theaters and we want to get all of my readers out there to watch it and to learn about it. Your documentary "Fed Up" really shines a light on the obesity epidemic that we're facing in this country today, especially in children. So for people who haven't seen it, can you tell us a little bit about the project?

LD: So first of all, I would say before you take another bite you need to see this movie. So basically, the film is for anyone who eats, and I'm pretty sure that would include your readers. So that's number one. I really think about it as a movie about what we're eating and why it's making everybody so sick. There are things...I was somebody who thought I knew a lot about food. Katie Couric was someone who thought she knew a lot about food when we started out on this project. We learned so much in the making of this movie. If you think you're a foodie, you think you know it all and you've read all the books – trust me, when you go to the theater and you watch this film you will learn things you didn't know. And it will blow your mind. You will get fed up, too. That's one of the goals of the film, that people get fed up. But also you'll leave the theater knowing, you know – five, ten things you didn't already know. It will affect the way you shop. It will affect the way you eat. It will affect the way you feed your kids, I think.

KC: Can you tell me some of the things you learned in the making of this film that really surprised you?

LD: All right. I'll tell you a couple of things. One thing that really surprised me was that 30 years ago, the United States government and the food industry knew that the American diet was going off the rails. They knew 30 years ago that we were eating too much meat. They knew 30 years ago that we were eating too much sugar. Now imagine that and then think about all that's happened in the last 10 years. Or 20 years. The entire snack food industry evolved. The entire granola bar phenomenon. Fruit yogurt. All these beverages that everybody is drinking. These are all recent. And the government knew 30 years ago that we were already consuming too much of this stuff. I just find that so upsetting. Stephanie Soechtig, the director of the film who does a

Kris Carr Interviews Laurie David, Producer of Fed Up

phenomenal job – she does up all this historical footage and it blows your mind. They knew and they did nothing. In fact, they did less than nothing because you go shopping, you know - lining every aisle is non-fat, low-fat options. I was always somebody who would choose the no fat, low-fat option because I'm always trying to watch my weight and whatever. But it turns out – here's the second thing I learned in the movie – when they took the fat out of the food 30 years ago, the food tasted terrible. It tasted bad. What did they have to do? They poured in the sugar. So now three decades later, we're raising children on this food. A lot of people are. And everyone is getting sick. Everyone is getting diabetes and everyone is getting fat. It's because of the unbelievable amount of sugar we're consuming the course of the day. You don't need any sugar, by the way, to get through your day, okay? But at the most, maximum, as two women we should 6 to 7 teaspoons. For kids it's like 3-4 teaspoons. For men it's like 8 teaspoons. That's the maximum anyone should have in a day. Well, guess what? Hello. The average person is having 22 teaspoons and up.

That's a hell of a lot of sugar. Sugar in small doses is fine. There's nothing wrong with it but you get to a certain level and it is toxic. And it is addictive. That's another thing I learned in this movie is just how addictive this food is. I can't tell you how powerful and important this movie is. I just tell people, like bring your kids. If you have kids 10 and up, bring your kids to the theater with you to see this film because we've been in this food fog and we really have to get out of it.

KC: Tell me a little about some of the kids that you follow in the film. It's absolutely heartbreaking what these children are going through and their trying to lose weight, desperately, but so many times the parents just have the wrong information.

LD: Stephanie and her team found four kids – they actually found 12 kids that they followed and we ended up using four in the film. When the DVD comes out it will have some other kids that we followed. But basically she gave them Flip cameras. It was such a great idea to do this because basically these kids would be in their rooms in the privacy of their homes, and they would be talking to the Flip camera. To hear young teenagers talk about what they're going through, this puts a completely different face on this problem.

KC: Now I'm going to go a little deeper because you love getting political.

LD: Me, political? Come on.

KC: We touched on this a little bit, but there are three players – basically – in the food system. Us, the consumers. The food companies themselves. And our government. Each one bears a

Kris Carr Interviews Laurie David, Producer of Fed Up

responsibility in making the changes that you and I both want to see. First off, let's just start with us. The consumers. What can we do to make better choices when we go to the grocery store?

LD: Well, the grocery store is booby-trapped and that's one of the big problems, I think. It really is. You remember Michael Pollan used to say just shop the periphery of the supermarkets. Don't go in the middle and you'll be fine. That doesn't work anymore. Literally. You have to walk into the store like a maniac advocate for your family. That's what you have to do today. Everywhere you look, junk and sugary candy and drinks, sodas, are screaming at you from the shelves. Everywhere you look. If you go down the dairy aisle you're not escaping it. From front to back is all the holiday candy. If you go down the produce aisle, to reach across the salad bar – I took a photograph on my Twitter feed – there's a huge Dorito display. It's absolutely infuriating. We have to wake up again. We have to see it. We have to complain. I think that's something people can really do. Start complaining to the store managers wherever you shop. And of course, the sugary cereals are at the eye level of your child. The checkout counter is booby-trapped. You could go to the grocery store full and if you see the food you will want it. They know that. So they put it everywhere you look. You know, you need Pampers you have to reach across the Gatorade display. And one of the things I'm hoping is that people start to see this and they start to get pissed because it's disgusting. It's not right. Put the stuff in one place in the corner, and if I want it I'll go find it. So, anyway, you have to shop like a maniac advocate for your family. That goes also to labels. I mean, stop buying things that have labels. That's one way. If you're buying things that do have labels, obviously if they have ingredients you've ever heard of don't buy it. If there's a long list of ingredients, don't buy it. Don't believe the labels. I think people naturally want to believe what a label says, right? So if it says 'all-natural' it means nothing. Thank God the label 'organic' still means something. Altogether, labels don't.

Here's another big one. You do have to have a little math lesson because they're trying to trick you. I don't want to sound like a conspiracy theorist but they want you to buy their product. So sugar is labeled in grams. Okay? So four grams equals one teaspoon. Get your kids involved in this. Four equals one. It's labeled in grams. Now, I'm a cook, right? I don't know what gram is. Do you know what a gram is? No. You don't know what a gram is either, Kris. There's no way. WE don't know what grams are. We know what teaspoons are. It should be labeled in teaspoons, but it's not. So four equals one. You have to do that math lesson. There's also another trick that there's over 56 names for sugar. So sugar by any other name is still as sweet. You have to look for those hidden words. And even if it says agave, that's still sugar. One basic thing everyone has to do – make your own salad dressing. Three ingredients and if you want to get fancy, you can add a fourth or fifth. We've got all these great salad dressing recipes in the new cookbook. Give this job to one of your kids. They will get so much pride out of the process of making the family salad dressing. Make your cute little labels on your computer. Print them out. Put them on the salad dressing. Make it every Sunday. It's great for the week. I mean right there, you will be doing something that will go a long way to teaching your kids 1) how to make their own salad dressing and 2) how to eat in a more healthy way.

Kris Carr Interviews Laurie David, Producer of Fed Up

KC: I love that you talked about this. For me, as somebody who came into the health world through a cancer diagnosis, I had to get so educated and really understand where the hidden sugars were. You talk about a lot of places. The salad dressing is such a great example. Really create a diet that would support my health as opposed to supporting my disease. That diet that I've been teaching and writing about with my books is anti-inflammatory diet. So we know that sugar is highly inflammatory but I think what your movie shows us is that we have no idea how much of it – it's so pervasive. It's in everything we're consuming. We have no idea how we're being targeted by the food companies, advertisers. It's not to scare us. It's to empower us.

LD: It's to empower us. That's the thing. No one cares about the health of your family, selling products like that. They really don't. If you image that half of everything we're eating is being made by strangers. We're outsourcing that job. My motto is cook or be cooked. And that's where we're at. That's the idea behind both cookbooks. It's just to give people the information and inspire them to do it and spread the news because that's the ultimate thing, is that it's good news. How often do you actually have a problem where the solution is tangible, in your kitchen, fun to do, is actually going to make you bond with your kids? It's going to be joy of your day, ultimately, when you start doing it. We just have to get everyone cooking. That's the most powerful thing anyone can do. It's cook real food yourself.

KC: Amen. If you don't cook, you'll be cooked. We're going to tweet that all over the Twittersphere. Let's go back to these players. We talked about the supermarket and I love that you said 'get pissed'. That's what I teach people. My motto is prevention is the best cure.

LD: Wouldn't that have helped? I just think about how many people that I know that have gotten cancer in one form or another. Then they change their diet. Then they change their lifestyle. I wish we could put happy energy into prevention. I'm sure if you could have prevented it, you would have seen the light sooner.

KC: Absolutely! When you say 'get pissed', I think what's also so great about the technology that we have today is we can talk to our local grocer. We can make demands in our community. We can also directly connect with these companies over Twitter. On Facebook.

LD: Look at what some of these moms have done. They got the formaldehyde out of Gatorade. What was it doing in there in the first place? The chemical dyes out of mac n cheese. That's the power of social media and the power of fed up moms and dads.

Kris Carr Interviews Laurie David, Producer of Fed Up

KC: If you just put on Facebook or Twitter “Why is this ingredient in here? Please tell me what ingredients are in here”, and more people tweet and post about it we’re going to see some changes. Look at what Food Baby is doing. She’s a remarkable example of changing industries. I think one of the reasons why I love the work that you do is sometimes people can feel so powerless. Like, what can one small person do in their living room? What can one small person do in their kitchen?

LD: My God. SO much. So much. That’s what so great about it. Everybody has this circle around their family because you all have teachers. If you have kids you have all the teachers, you have the coaches, you have your book club. You have your movie night people. You have your church, your temple, whatever it is. That’s an entire community. For example a lot of the problems that are happening in schools, if you got just your classroom’s moms and dads, you’d be starting from a level where serious change could happen.

KC: I want to talk about politicians and our food industry a little bit. Because we’ve heard that the politicians are in the pockets of the food industry and we understand that change has to be made from the bottom up, but how do we make change from the top down? How can we then take what we’ve learned as consumers and cooks and people who love our communities and pressure the people in the industry and also our politicians to hear our voices? So that we can meet together in the middle?

LD: The way industry hears your voices is through your dollar bills. So stop buying the products. That’s number one. Industry will only change when they’re affected by the bottom line. Politicians are kind of the same way, too, but they take so much money from these industries. Congress decides that pizza is a vegetable. That’s a line on our poster. What congress is saying to the American school kids. F U. That’s what they’re saying when they say pizza is a vegetable and French fries are a vegetable. You have to vote these guys out and you have to vote in people who are educated and informed on food issues. You have to make food a voting issue. Right now it’s not but it needs to be.

KC: I think it’s our job to really do our homework on our politicians. Especially at the local level, not just a national level. But really understanding what our politicians stand up for and really looking at what matters to us, including like you said our food, our environment, our healthcare. You know. Think about your family and vote accordingly.

LD: And we need people to start to agree to become elected themselves at local levels. School board presidents. You know – anybody who is smart is probably going to stay out of politics. But somehow we have to get some of these great people into politics.

Kris Carr Interviews Laurie David, Producer of Fed Up

KC: That's good. That's very inspiring actually. I'm very glad you said that. That's really wonderful because I think there's people at home who will go 'wait a minute, that's true. I can do that.' Lower level positions are the heart and soul of the engines. So thank you for saying that. Let's move over to your cookbook. Tell me about this book, because I'm looking at the pictures. I bought it this weekend. I can't wait to try some of the recipes. We rarely talk about cookbooks that have some animal products in it, but not all of my readers are vegan. I love that you've really identified the issues. You address the issues. You educate people on what's going on with the food system. And that the vegetarian and vegan options aren't the exception, they're the norm.

LD: Okay, first of all the book is filled with simple, healthy recipes that won't take you very long to make and have five or less ingredients. Kristen Uhrenholdt, who is my partner in these cookbooks – it's like having Tinkerbell in the kitchen and she's sprinkling magic dust on everything. I can tell you, this is the food that we eat. The fact that people think that cooking is hard or takes too long, those are marketing claims we've bought into because they've been hammered into our heads for a couple of decades. Cooking isn't hard. It doesn't take that long. It's super fun. This book is filled with those kinds of recipes. Another theme of the book is engaging your kids in the process. I just think this book is really going to help people. If you haven't been cooking or you cook a little bit, you just can't go wrong with a lot of what's in this book. I have to send you The Family Dinner, too, because that's a fantastic book. It was the first book. It's about the importance of sitting down to the table which a lot of people aren't doing anymore. The benefits from that are mind-blowing. There's been so much research on this. If you just sit down – if you're doing it twice a week now and you add a third night, you get that many more benefits. The more you do, the more benefits you get. It's everything that a parent worries about. Raising kids are improved by sitting down to meals together.

KC: That's beautiful. I see it in my own life. I don't have children, but when my husband and I actually sit at the table after I've made a delicious meal as opposed to sitting in front of the television we feel better. We sleep better. Our relationship improves. So I can only imagine what it does for bonding a family.

LD: Look, your family is whoever you eat with.

KC: Yeah.

LD: That's your family. And you should be sitting down to dinners together. No screens. No computers. No TV's. You know, that's like a healthy lifestyle.

Kris Carr Interviews Laurie David, Producer of Fed Up

KC: You know, you can tell from Laurie's personality and my readers know from my personality, we want to encourage you to take risks. Sometimes what happens with women is we're afraid to fail. We're afraid we're going to do something that's not good. We're afraid we're not perfect. We're afraid to put ourselves out there. The one place that you can put yourself out there is in the kitchen. You can't make mistakes. If you have a shitty meal, give it to your dog. Learn something from it. Sometimes when I'm creating a recipe I think it's going to come out a certain way. I can be easily disappointed if it doesn't come out the way I want it, but most of the time when I screw up a recipe I've created a breakthrough.

LD: Something new. And all you have to do is rename it.

KC: Yeah, you just rename it and say 'wow, I never knew I could make this'.

LD: You just rename it. And nobody knows the difference and everybody is so appreciative that it's home cooked. Don't be afraid on your kitchen. But that's you know, one of the themes behind this cookbook. Making it simple enough that people who have been intimidated won't be. The great thing about cooking is the more you do, it's amazing – you get really good at it. Then all of a sudden it takes half the time to do it. Because you're kind of just doing your own thing and you change it a little bit. It's really fantastic. The key to a healthy week, everyone's busy, we're all busy, but you're not that busy on Sundays. Sunday is the day where we actually do have time. Sunday is the day where you get yourself organized for the week. We have a whole page on this in the back. There's some basic things you can do on Sunday that will guarantee your week will be healthy and smooth and you won't have to panic. You won't have to order takeout. They're simple things. I'll give you a couple of things I do. First of all, on Sunday night I always hard boil half a dozen or a dozen eggs. So now I have hardboiled eggs in my fridge that will be good for the week. I can chop them up into egg salad. I can slice them into a green salad. I might have them for breakfast. I can have them for lunch. That's done. That takes 2 seconds, right? To peel a hardboiled egg that's already cooked. I make refrigerator lentils. It's a recipe from this cookbook. I love lentils. They're a great source of protein. You should have a glass Ball jar of refrigerated lentils every Sunday. You sauté your onions and carrots and cook the lentils – done. They're in your friends. Those you can serve as a side dish, a main course, on top of salad, you can toss them into soups you're making. There's so much you can do with them. And the same with quinoa. Just yesterday I had the quinoa in the fridge and I had the lentils, and said "I wonder what these are like together?" And I tossed them together and they were fantastic. Ton of things to do on Sunday. Pick your three recipes you want to make for the week. Always make enough for leftovers. I don't know what I would do without leftovers. All the effort I put into one meal, I get at least two meals out of it. So now our time, it's not that much, and you're eating fresh cooked, healthy, delicious food.

Kris Carr Interviews Laurie David, Producer of Fed Up

KC: You're speaking my language. I love that you talk about Sundays because that's exactly what we share in Crazy Sexy Kitchen, and also batch kitchen. When you're spending that time in there, make more. Put it in the freezer.

LD: Make more. Split ideas with your girlfriends. You have a girlfriend who is cooking too? She makes two things, double-batched. You make two things double batched? Guess what – your week is done!

KC: That's awesome.

LD: Friday night, you have everyone over for a potluck meal. Everyone brings one thing and you're eating great food. And it's fun. It's bonding. So I don't know. I think we're onto something here.

KC: We're onto something, girl! So I know a lot of parents who are stressed out about school lunches. Can you give some of our listeners out there some suggestions? Any advice about how to make sure their kids are eating well at school?

LD: Well, the school lunch issue is a big issue in this country. There's a couple of scenes about it in "Fed Up". One of our kids went undercover with her Flip camera into her school cafeteria and showed us what they're serving. There's some things going on in school across the country that will make your listeners and readers crazy. You have no idea how the fast food industry has infiltrated these schools. To turn them into customers. It's really a terrible problem. There's a big fight on Capitol Hill right now, that mostly the republican congress is trying to roll back the little bit of improvement that the Obama administration has made on school lunch. Michelle Obama is fiercely defending this and fighting it. We are all fighting. The "Fed Up" movie delivered a tin of M&M's to every member of congress saying "would you serve tis to your kids for lunch"? Because that's half the amount of sugar that's being served in school lunches everyday across this country. The school lunch program was finally improved a little while ago. They improved it by six cents. This is what congress is trying to roll back. A six cent improvement for lunch for kids in this country. And there is no question that from scratch, real food, can be cooked in the cafeterias. It can be done in a cost efficient way. It's happening all over the country – people who are taking back the control of their school lunches. Today I was just a helper at a community school lunch at the Chilmark School here. The kids harvested all the greens from the garden that they're growing. They sat down at tables, family style, with plates and cloth napkins and glasses of water and ate this delicious school lunch. It was amazing. It breaks your heart that isn't happening at every school in the country. Everybody has to use their social media. I think they should follow Michelle Obama's Twitter feed, my Twitter feed, anyone else working on this issue.

Kris Carr Interviews Laurie David, Producer of Fed Up

Rosa DeLauro, a congresswoman who is very active on this issue. Get active on it. It's not right. Even if our kids are eating well, the fact that there's any kids out there eating junk for lunch and then we're scratching our heads why one out of three kids are going to have diabetes by mid-century. They're all our kids and it's unacceptable. We have to put our food down, here. This is the place. For some of these kids, that's the only place their eating. The system needs change. We need to go back to the way we used to do. Fresh food, cooked in the school that day. I mean, it really is immoral. And we need to get outraged about it.

KC: We are getting outraged and you're helping us to do that.

LD: Do you know the school lunch program started because boys going into the military were undernourished. This is an amazing irony. That's why the school lunch program started. Now, today, we have boy trying to get into the military who are too overweight to serve. So this issue of obesity, childhood obesity, if you think 'well, it's not my problem', think about who are going to be the first responders. Who are going to be fit to serve in the military?

KC: It's our pockets, too, because as health care costs rise – why are they rising? We're not very aware of what we're doing today. We have no idea the consequences of tomorrow. The consequences of tomorrow are all about chronic disease and rising health care costs. I think that is the inconvenient truth of our time today.

LD: That's exactly right. You know, you're totally right. It's one thing to kind of be overwhelmed with daily pressures that we're all under. But I think there's certain things that really require our attention. Because you know, our kids are going to pay the price. We're going to pay the price. I think global warming, climate, is one of them. How we're getting food and what we're eating and what it's doing to us is another.

KC: I just want to tell you, it has been so wonderful to spend some time with you in our living rooms and if anybody can take something away from this interview today – you're going to see the film "Fed Up", check out Laurie's book. I think what I feel the most when I talk to you is, I feel your passion. Your passion is contagious. We can take all of our frustration and all of our pissed-offness and we can channel it into passion and that's how we're going to see that change. Thank you so much for your time, Laurie.

LD: Amen to you, Kris. Thank you.

Kris Carr Interviews Laurie David, Producer of Fed Up

KC: Oh, you're welcome. And anybody out there listening, let us know how you feel. What was your takeaway? What's going on in your life? How are you taking back your health and your children's health? We'd love to hear from you. Have a great day. We adore you. See you next time!