EIT Food Fight Podcast - Episode 3B - Food Pairing.mp3

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:00:06] Welcome to this bonus episode of the Food Fight podcast from EIT Food.

Matt Eastland [00:00:11] In these episodes we want to shine the light on the new projects and agrifood startups and hear about their efforts to fight for a better food future.

Bernard Lahousse [00:00:22] My name is Bernard Lahousse. I'm one of the co-founders of Food Pairing. I'm really passionate about good food and about data. I'm the science director within Food Pairing and I'm working together with the data science, data engineering and the flavour science team.

[00:00:39] We are fighting for the future of food because food contains one of the solutions towards climate change and towards health related issues. If you can find ways to really support people, then food is certainly the solution for a lot of problems that we face in the future.

[00:00:59] We started Food Pairing about 10 years ago because we had a mission. We wanted to use food as a way to solve climate change and health issues like obesity. And we found out that one of the strategies to make that work is flavour. It's very difficult for people to change their behaviour, definitely when it is a diet. Between, you can understand the flavour and why they like certain flavours. We can really help our consumers to make a transition towards more healthy and more sustainable foods.

[00:01:34] The positive impact of our work is really towards people and towards companies, we help companies in detecting what new food they should bring on the market. So we help them to bring more sustainable and healthy food on the market. And it's also towards people because we want to help through AI and advise in developing a more healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

[00:02:00] What is at stake is if you look towards food companies, if they are not capable to develop the products that consumers want, those companies will lose brand value and will lose volume. So for companies, it's really crucial to embrace a data driven NPD so they can agilely develop the products that consumers are looking for.

[00:02:26] So innovation for us is about a multidisciplinary collaboration from the beginning on which Food Pairing, we worked with chefs around the world, but we also work with people active in psychology, active in health, active in food science. And they believe that, too, combining all those disciplinary insights that we can come up with the foods of the future. Food for us, is really about happiness. It's finding people to explore new tastes and foods. And when you really like food and enjoy it and the company, then you will start to enjoy more complex foods and complex food means that you will eat more healthy. So that's why for us, teaching children and how to appreciate food is really crucial. If they like food and they develop their food taste, they will in the future never problems with their health because they will enjoy healthy, complex foods. We look at the future of food in a way that people explore new food and new exciting combinations. It's not that vegetables are boring and that cake is exciting. No. By combining exciting combinations with vegetables, they can also be really exciting and actually bring more joy than a piece of cake. So it's not about reducing sugar and fat in products. It's really about adding excitement to healthy products like fruits and vegetables and let people explain how good they actually are.

[00:03:59] We help people to make more informed food choices by analyzing products we get from chefs. We see new vegetables that are sustainable, but often people don't know how to use it. So by analyzing these, we can help people in showing what possible combinations that they can make and what dishes will fit with those ingredients.

[00:04:23] We believe that food can be tasty and healthy and sustainable. The way we do that is by digitizing food, by digitizing food, we can understand how the food tastes like and we are capable to generate new, exciting pairings, so we can connect actually what you like with what is healthy and tasty.

[00:04:46] We help leading companies to improve the food they offer by analyzing their products and understanding what combines with their products, and plugging that into an AI system that predicts what new food that they can bring on the market.

[00:05:02] Examples of products that we tried to create awareness for? There are really multiple. We had a project on buyer catch of fish. We analyzed fish, which was normally thrown overboard and showed the chefs what combinations that they can make. We also analyze fruits and vegetables from around the world and show people how they can integrate it into their daily diet.

[00:05:27] We believe that our work is important because we really need to change the way we consume food. If you look at all the problems with climate change and health, we need to make a shift towards more healthy and sustainable food. And by digitizing food and providing recommendations, we believe that we can really help consumers to make that transition towards a more healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

[00:05:58] One of the achievements of Food Pairing is that if you compare ten years ago towards now - ten years ago, even top chefs were often hesitant to combine certain ingredients. By intuition they felt that they could combine those, but they didn't dare to do it. By developing the science behind Food Pairing really opened, a whole pathway of new, exciting combinations. You don't have to think in savoury and sweet, no you can combine actually everything together. And the power of Food Pairing is that we show the way and we show that we can really make exciting new combinations even with ordinary products. You can create the most fantastic dishes by applying Food Pairing, and we've been quite lucky that from the beginning on we had ambassadors from restaurants like 'X', 'X' and 'X' that really supported us. And that also brought that message that the future of food, it's really about exciting combinations and exciting combinations can be healthy and tasty.

[00:07:01] The way we collaborate with EIT Food is on a project called Food Ambassadors, where we invite food influencers from around Europe to work with chefs from around the globe to find solutions towards healthy and sustainable food. We have over the last 10 years spent a lot of energy in developing algorithms to discover new, exciting combinations. We really want to add a layer of health on top of that, so we really want to prove that healthy and tasty food is not a contradiction when they are actually linked to each other.

[00:07:35] My hope is to find in the future even more diversity and cuisine and ingredients which are offered. There is a lot of potential within supermarkets to come up with much more exciting vegetables than the carrot and the cauliflower we have now and that my children in the future can have a whole range of tastes that they can discover.

[00:07:58] The message that we would like to send is that good food is good business. The future of food is really about more healthy and more sustainable foods. And to get there, we believe that a data driven approach is the way to go.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:08:18] Thanks for listening to this bonus episode of the Food Fight podcast.

Matt Eastland [00:08:22] To find out more and to learn how you can get involved in the fight for better food future, head over to eitfood.eu/podcast.