



Our Hen House

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Interview with Jose Franco

By OUR HEN HOUSE

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*Following is a transcript of interviews with **JOSE FRANCO** conducted by **JASMIN SINGER** and **MARIANN SULLIVAN** of [Our Hen House](#), for the [Our Hen House podcast](#). The interview aired on Episode 226.*

JASMIN: One of our recent discoveries here in Brooklyn has been Stoop Juice here in Park Slope. And Jose Franco is the man behind Stoop Juice. And we were so excited when he joined us on our show on Episode Three, where he talked to us all about some of our favorite smoothies and juices and the importance of consuming them regularly.

Welcome to Our Hen House, Jose.

JOSE: Hi, thank you for having me.

JASMIN: It's an honor for us to have you.

MARIANN: I'm really sorry you had to follow Little Miss Sunshine. It's a hard act to follow, but you're gonna be great. Don't worry.

JOSE: Thank you.

MARIANN: 'Cause you got the kale.

JOSE: Hell yeah!

JASMIN: Yeah. Well, kale is all the rage! Kale. Where was kale when we were growing up? That's what I want to know. Why is it suddenly so famous?

JOSE: I think kale is big now because of its properties. And now with the huge influx of people having cancer, that's one of the allures of kale.

JASMIN: Well, because there's so many nutritional properties that's inherent, and phytonutrients in fruits and vegetables. And that's one reason why we love Stoop Juice, which is your store. And we are regulars, I admit. And I love it! Tell us why juicing has suddenly become so popular. What is so fabulous about juicing?

JOSE: In a nutshell, juicing is a good source to get chlorophylls. And chlorophylls -- if you're juicing, you want to juice greens. That's where you get nutrients in your body that alkalines your body and helps your immune system.

MARIANN: Yeah, absolutely. And when you're juicing, you get even more of the nutrients than you do if you were eating. Eating the stuff is obviously good for you, but juicing gives you even more of those nutrients, right?

JOSE: Yeah, without a doubt. By removing the fiber, you don't have to digest the fiber. And through the juice, you get the benefit of the nutrients without having to have your body digest the fiber. That's the benefit of juicing.

JASMIN: So at Stoop Juice, you have juices and you have smoothies. Could you talk a little bit about some of the benefits of juices versus smoothies and smoothies versus juices?

JOSE: Sure. Smoothies are great. It's a nice meal replacement. Most of our smoothies have plant-based protein, and that works as -- it's better than having, let's say, simple sugars. You'll be having complex sugars that goes into your body and your body breaks them down a lot slower, meaning it doesn't go into your blood, and then you digest them, whereas juicing, it's the same thing but you don't have the fiber. You don't have the bulk, and also for the most part, the sugar content in juicing is usually a lot less.

JASMIN: Okay. This is noted. This is interesting because we juice fast quite a lot. And I have started to have smoothies during juice fasts. Do you think that that's allowed, to have fiber when you're having juices?

MARIANN: I'm not giving up my smoothies. Don't even go there.

JASMIN: I just wonder if you can mix and mingle.

JOSE: We all march to a different drum.

JASMIN: That means yes.

JOSE: And whatever works for you, and we all have different ranges, but with juicing, as long as you follow the protocol of 70/30. You want 70% to be vegetables, 30% you want it to be fruits. And smoothies, smoothies have their place.

MARIANN: They do. And you don't live with Jasmin, which occasionally means that you have to dance to her drum.

JASMIN: I beg your pardon?

MARIANN: But I think that we can fit smoothies in, even when we're juicing. And then there's the whole problem of when we're actually eating all the time, and we're definitely fitting smoothies in then 'cause I love them. And I love your smoothies.

You know, five years ago, I'm not sure I knew what juicing was, and now it's all the rage. Have you noticed a big difference in your business?

JOSE: Big difference. And within juicing, there're differences. There's shops that just provide juicing, and then there's shops that focus on organic and having integrity. And as long as -- I think if people had choice and the option, this is how they would eat. It just has to be economically viable for businesses to offer it because if people are selling juices and smoothies and they're paying their bills, they're gonna keep doing it. It's very simple. I don't

think it's yet, but there'll be a time where it's not an exclusive neighborhood or the better neighborhoods that have the juice shop.

JASMIN: I'm so glad you brought that up, because there's such truth in that, right Mariann, about the fact that fruit and vegetables is just not subsidized by --

MARIANN: I know. Compared to animal-based foods, which are not good for you at all, aside from being bad for animals and the planet, fruits and vegetables don't receive government subsidies. So people are paying a lot more for them, and as a result, people of limited means, they're not getting all of these nutrients, which would keep them healthy, which would keep health costs down. It's crazy. There's been some reform of that, but not nearly enough. Animal agriculture in this country is far too powerful.

You have a nine-year-old, I understand.

JOSE: Yes, I do.

MARIANN: How do you feel about the way kids are fed and how kids are fed at schools? Are you seeing any improvements?

JOSE: In general, in my immediate circle, I would say yes, obviously because I have the means and my little girl is exposed to what I know and what my wife knows and what we feed her. But for the most part, we have a long way to go. We have a very long way to go.

MARIANN: Yeah. We should not be feeding our kids junk.

JASMIN: No. I think that this is what's gonna save everything. It's gonna save the world, this piece of kale right here!

MARIANN: Isn't there that t-shirt, "Only kale can save us now"?

JASMIN: Yes. Yeah, it's Herbivore clothing that has that shirt. So Jose, I understand that you, like me, like Mariann, have undergone a substantial weight loss, and this ties into your own personal juicing story. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

JOSE: Yeah. About four years ago, I became vegan. And in the process, the first 60 days I lost 50 pounds.

JASMIN: Wow!

JOSE: And the first 120 days, I lost 70 pounds.

JASMIN: Very nice.

MARIANN: Good lord!

JOSE: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JASMIN: That's incredible.

MARIANN: That is a lot of --

JASMIN: How did you do that?

MARIANN: Yeah, how did you do that? That was so fast.

JASMIN: Were you eating vegan cupcakes the whole time?

JOSE: I juice fast. I walked a lot. When I started, I said to myself, I want to lose weight in a way that, regardless of my age, if I, let's say, fall off the wagon, I can go back. And that was the thing. I would walk, and I just nourished myself with juices and the rest is history.

MARIANN: Once you find the right way, it becomes easy, even if you've struggled with it your whole life. If you find the right way that really works, and if you incorporate all of these unbelievably healthy foods, it becomes so much easier than it ever was before. That was my experience.

JASMIN: I know, me too! I lost 100 pounds, as a lot of the people who follow Our Hen House's podcast know, because it's been quite a journey for me. And I regularly juice fast, and I eat whole foods-based items in their most unprocessed form. But in addition to that, every now and then I kick back, I have my chocolate beer and my vegan cupcake. But for the most part, though of course I'm vegan and that would never change, I definitely strive more for making this the center of my dish.

MARIANN: Well, when you eat like this some of the time, then you can eat more indulgently at other times. It's all a balance.

JASMIN: And speaking of balance, I want some balance in my life by way of a smoothie because you are planning on making us something today. What are you gonna make us?

JOSE: Well, what we're making today is a smoothie that -- there's a story behind that too. It was a smoothie I would make for myself. And that smoothie, I named it the Resolution. Well, my wife named it the Resolution. At the end of the day, she calls the shots. Just make sure you get that.

JASMIN: The ginger shots!

JOSE: Hah, that's good, I like that.

JASMIN: Thank you.

JOSE: So what would happen -- customers would see me drinking this, and they're like, "hey, what's that?"

MARIANN: Well, yeah.

JOSE: And sure enough, there were about two dozen customers that would be like, "make the one for you." And then the rest is history, and now it's on the menu.

MARIANN: It's just one of my favorite smoothies I've ever had. It's sensational.

JASMIN: We did put in a special request for the Resolution.

MARIANN: Too many smoothies are just fruit. People don't think of including vegetables in smoothies. But once you do, wow. It's delicious.

JASMIN: We start off every morning with a smoothie that has loads of kale and vegetables in it. But tell us what's gonna be in our Resolution today.

JOSE: Well, the Resolution has beet juice, that's the base. The base is beet juice. It has kale. It has spinach. It has gluten-free granola. It has a plant-based protein. And it has ginger, it has shots of ginger in it. And that's pretty much it.

JASMIN: And it has bananas in it, right?

JOSE: It does have bananas. But the bananas, I forgot to bring the bananas.

JASMIN: That's okay because of the magic of TV.

MARIANN: Yeah, we have no bananas.

JASMIN: Yes, we have no bananas!

MARIANN: No singing.

JASMIN: No singing. We're going to make this and then magically have one that has bananas in it. So let's try it! This is our Vitamix, it came right from our kitchen.

JOSE: So just go through it?

JASMIN: Yeah, let's do it! Let's see. Tell us what you're putting in.

JOSE: Okay, the first thing is, everything at Stoop Juice is organic because if I can't sell it I have to eat it. That's the motto. So if I'm not selling it --

JASMIN: That's beet juice, so you've already juiced it.

JOSE: Yeah, this is beet juice.

JASMIN: I love beet juice. You know what's interesting about beet juice? And this might also be in TMI territory. You know precisely the amount of time it takes your body to digest it.

JOSE: Yes, yes.

JASMIN: You get terrified for approximately five seconds, then you're like, "ah, the beets."

JOSE: No, you remember. The next thing I'm putting in, I'm putting in kale. And kale, forget about it. Kale, you can't go wrong with kale. Then we'll go over to spinach.

JASMIN: Spinach, I find that you can put a significant amount into your smoothie and you won't even taste it. Kale, I feel like there's a ceiling. Like, you can only go so far as the amount of kale, but spinach, you could just keep putting it in.

MARIANN: But you mentioned before, I just want to reiterate it. There was no kale when I was a kid. I never even heard of it. And now it's just everybody's favorite vegetable. It's my favorite vegetable. I love kale.

JOSE: Well, mentioning kale, I'm Puerto Rican. The only thing I knew -- it's not that no Puerto Ricans know about kale, but for me, iceberg lettuce and that was it.

MARIANN: Yeah.

JOSE: That was it.

MARIANN: That was a mainstay of my childhood too.

JOSE: Iceberg lettuce. We peeked at iceberg lettuce. The next thing I'm putting in is ginger. And this is --

JASMIN: Can I smell that?

JOSE: Sure. Help yourself.

JASMIN: I *love* -- we're getting a little fun here with the ginger juice. Ohh. I feel like I'm getting healthier by smelling it. Is that possible?

MARIANN: Ginger is so good for you.

JOSE: Yes.

MARIANN: It purifies.

JOSE: And it's anti-inflammatory. It's similar to turmeric. It's very good for you, and --

MARIANN: But it tastes much better.

JOSE: I agree with you.

JASMIN: Yeah, turmeric --

JOSE: I really enjoy ginger.

MARIANN: This, I've never heard of. This is a great idea.

JOSE: This is granola.

JASMIN: This is granola. We vegans know our granola. Kumbaya, my lord, Kumbaya. Oh, no singing, I'm sorry.

JOSE: Okay.

MARIANN: We have a singer on.

JASMIN: That's true. I'll leave the singing to our next segment.

JOSE: This is the granola. I try to be generous with the granola.

JASMIN: Okay. And you said that was gluten-free?

JOSE: Gluten-free granola.

JASMIN: Okay. To be honest, I could care less if it was gluten-free, but I know there's at least 35 people watching this that are like, "Gluten-free, yeah!"

JOSE: And last but not least, what we do is we put in -- the brand we use at Stoop Juice is Sun Warrior.

JASMIN: Yeah. I love Sun Warrior.

JOSE: And we only use the raw vegan blend, the raw vegan protein blend. And we use the vanilla flavored one.

JASMIN: Okay, and this is based with pea protein and cranberry protein. I never heard of that before. And hemp seed protein. Nice!

MARIANN: You know, there was just that recent study saying that over the age of 50 -- I think it was 50 -- that the worst thing you can eat is animal-based protein. It increases your risk of cancer dramatically, but plant-based protein makes no difference whatsoever.

JASMIN: Nice!

MARIANN: And that's probably not just over the age of 50, that's who the study was about.

JOSE: And this company in particular's a small family company that they don't have their act together, but their product is first and foremost.

JASMIN: I think that was a good statement about Sun Warrior. I always buy Sun Warrior. Well, I don't always. I also buy Vega.

JOSE: Fulfilment can be tricky, but the product with what you're looking for. It's like going to a restaurant and the food is horrible, but the service is great. This is the opposite. The product is great.

MARIANN: Yeah, that happens, doesn't it?

JASMIN: So make this for us.

MARIANN: Sometimes you have to make sacrifices to get good products. It doesn't always go together.

JASMIN: This is the loud noise that my niece is scared of. I always have to tell her, "We're about to turn the Vitamix on!" and she goes like this. But this is just such an amazingly powerful machine. May I?

JOSE: Sure.

JASMIN: I love the Vitamix. And it comes with a big thing! Look at that. By the magic of TV, I'm going to hand you yours, Jose. And I'm going to hand me mine.

MARIANN: What about me?

JOSE: Thank you, Jose.

JASMIN: No, we have a special one for Mariann. So that was Jose's, and Mariann, our friend Danielle, who's our PA today and our outreach manager, knows that it's your birthday this week and that we're juice fasting. And so she made you a happy birthday jar, and it says "happy birthday" and there's a chicken on it as well. So you're not getting a cake because we're in the middle of a juice fast now, so this is the second best thing, which is a Resolution.

MARIANN: Danielle, thank you so much, this is adorable. We could sell these.

JASMIN: Yeah. And I'm really excited because in addition to having a wonderful birthday girl on with us, and in addition to having this incredible Resolution, all of your cups and other products are also very eco-friendly, right?

JOSE: We only use green ware at Stoop Juice. It's something that, I don't know, before I opened the shop, I had a vision of I want to do the right thing but I don't want to see floating plastic cups in the Pacific Ocean.

MARIANN: Absolutely. I love that you do that.

JASMIN: Me too. Well, let's do a toast for Mariann's birthday.

MARIANN: Oh, thank you.

JOSE: Cheers, happy birthday.

MARIANN: Thank you.

JASMIN: Happy birthday. And I'm gonna try my Resolution.

MARIANN: Do I get to drink?

JASMIN: Mm-hm.

JOSE: This is the part that I'm good at.

JASMIN: This is about to become inappropriate.

MARIANN: It's so good!

JASMIN: Thank you so much, this is absolutely outstanding.

MARIANN: It's so much better than you would think, knowing that it's full of spinach and kale. People are looking at it now and thinking we're crazy. But they're wrong. They're totally wrong.

JASMIN: No, but it's absolutely delicious. You have to go to Stoop Juice and you'll probably see us there. And Jose, thank you so much for joining us today in Our Hen House. I hope that you'll stick around with us.

JOSE: Thank you for having me.