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Breaking Big Food — How Small, Independent Farmers Help Keep America Healthy

Analysis by Dr. Joseph Mercola | November 07, 2026

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- The documentary "Breaking Big Food" exposes how America's food system prioritizes corporate profits over consumer health, linked to widespread obesity, autoimmune diseases, and other chronic conditions
- Patrick Sullivan's thyroid cancer diagnosis prompted him and his wife Ashley to scrutinize their food choices, ultimately inspiring them to build a business centered on clean, simple ingredients
- Small, local farmers raising grass fed beef, pasture-raised chickens, and fresh greens offer healthier alternatives to industrialized food, though regulations often favor large operations over these producers
- Big Food spends heavily on marketing ultraprocessed foods as fun and harmless, shaping unhealthy eating habits from childhood and creating a population-wide experiment without informed consent
- Digital farmers markets and resources like EatWild.com and Local Harvest help consumers find trustworthy, sustainably produced food, making healthier choices more accessible across America

The food system in America is broken. It's set up in a way that greatly profits Big Food, leaving consumers unhealthy in the aftermath. This is the central premise of the 2025 documentary "Breaking Big Food," which was produced by Jigsaw Health.[1]

Food is the cornerstone of optimal health, and as the saying goes, you are what you eat. In the documentary, entrepreneurs Patrick and Ashley Sullivan explore how unhealthy eating is linked to obesity, autoimmune disease, and a host of other disorders to many Americans. The worst part is that this is all by design.

However, not all hope is lost. Small, independent farmers have stepped up and are committed to helping people take control of their health. I encourage you to watch the documentary, as it gives insight into how Big Food operates, and what you can do to break free from its clutches.

The Diagnosis That Changed Everything

The documentary follows the Sullivans in their quest to understand the current state of the food system in America, as well as meet people initiating radical changes. To start, Patrick shares how his thyroid cancer diagnosis reshaped their lives.

- **The immediate effect of cancer on families —** A single diagnosis forced the Sullivans to pause and raise questions about daily habits that once felt harmless. Food, household products, and everyday exposures were scrutinized heavily.
- **Fear turned into action —** Instead of staying overwhelmed, Patrick and Ashley focused on what they could control. Food became their starting point because it is a daily choice. They began removing ingredients they no longer trusted and rebuilt meals around simpler, cleaner foods.
- **How personal change grew into a larger purpose —** Patrick and Ashley channeled what they learned into building a food business with strict rules — simple ingredients, no seed oils, and real flavor. Their story also serves another important lesson — you don't need to experience a life-threatening diagnosis to learn what is in your food and how it's impacting your health.

Greens That Stay Alive Longer

After Patrick's cancer diagnosis, he and his wife set off to look for real, healthy food. One company featured in the film is Good Living Greens, which shows how fresh greens are grown and delivered outside the typical industrial system.

- **The importance of freshness in produce —** Consumers and local communities can largely benefit from consistent access to fresh greens, and the key is how they are made. When greens are grown close to where you live, they arrive fresher and last longer.

- **Giving back to the community —** Good Living Greens is doing a service to their community by offering clean, organic produce from personally vetted farmers. According to co-owner Jill Keefe, less handling and shorter travel time protect freshness as well.

- **Keeping it local maintains quality —** All Americans deserve access to clean, nutritious produce. However, it's practically impossible for a farmer to follow this practice on a national scale. That's why it's important for local farmers to rise and meet the demand of the community where they live, which may support health outcomes:

    > *"The farmers and the vendors that we work with, none of us have any intention to scale beyond our current size. So, what we need is instead of Big Food and big industries and industrial farming, we need to break that down and federate it and have communities that have their own little ecosystems local retailers, local farmers, local food makers all talking and working with each other about how to meet the needs."*

The Impact of How Meat Is Raised on Your Health

It's not just vegetables that have been hijacked by Big Food. As expected, meat quality has greatly suffered. In light of this, one company highlighted by the Sullivans as a light in the dark is the Arizona Grass-Raised Beef Company.

- **What you see is what you get —** The type of beef by the featured company does not come from large feedlots or anonymous supply chains. Instead, it comes from ranchers who control how animals are raised from start to finish. When cattle are raised on grass rather than industrial feed, the final product is different in quality and texture.

- **How inputs shape outcomes —** Grass fed cattle graze naturally and are not rushed through growth using industrial shortcuts. This results in beef that is ultimately more nutritious compared to conventionally raised options.

- **Transparency benefits your health —** The documentary presents a key takeaway regarding the meat you buy. It's important to know where it comes from and who produces it. In addition, local ranchers keep money in the community and offer an alternative to mass-market meat that hides its origins.

- **Not all eggs are created equal —** The Sullivans also visited Inspire Farms, a business based in Mesa, Arizona that specializes in pasture-raised chickens. Tiffiny Lilley, the owner, tells them that many of her customers are supposedly allergic to eggs, but in her experience, they were allergic to corn — a common chicken feed. Lilley shares:

  > *"So, at 50% of the people come in and tell me they can't eat eggs are also allergic to corn. And I'm like, 'Just buy some of our eggs, try it out and let me know.' And they come back and they're like, 'Holy cow, I can eat eggs because most of the eggs in the market have been fed corn.'"*

- **Local dairy farmers are trying to survive —** The Sullivans also feature Crow's Dairy, a small operation specializing in dairy products made from goat's milk. Wendell Crow, the owner, explains that many of the agricultural rules and regulations in place today are written with big operations in mind, even though small businesses work very differently:

> *"The USDA does nothing to help the small farmers. Farm Bureau does nothing to help the small farmers. They all think big. The small farmer is providing healthy food ...*
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> *But it's just such a conundrum trying to produce a good product and stay in business. I feel bad all the time because there's restaurants who can't afford my cheese, and you have to be really high. And so, I'm only feeding rich people, but I have to charge that to stay in business because I'm small."*

Escaping the Trap Set by Big Food

After featuring local farmers, the documentary takes a different turn — looking at food through a cultural lens. The film raises the question of why certain foods feel normal, expected, and even celebrated, while others feel strange or extreme.

- **Money is being spent to tell you what to eat —** According to Alex Clark, host of the Culture Apothecary podcast, food choices are influenced less by facts and more by what shows up in newsfeeds, ads, and conversations. Culture teaches you what's acceptable to crave and what's worth questioning. For example, when unhealthy food is marketed as fun, easy, and harmless, it becomes part of daily life without much resistance.

  Younger generations grew up surrounded by ultraprocessed foods designed to be irresistible and heavily marketed from childhood. This shaped habits early, long before people understood what they were consuming. Big Food has conducted a silent, population-wide experiment where consent was never asked, yet consequences are now apparent.

- **Big Food and weight gain —** The documentary features Leah Hope, a health transformation coach who was able to break free from Big Food. Throughout her adulthood, she struggled with excess weight linked to ultraprocessed foods.

But at one point, she realized that she was trapped, which caused her to change her habits and lose 190 pounds naturally. By moving toward simpler meals, her body began responding in a healthier way.

Hope did not rely on short-term plans or extreme rules. She focused on habits she could maintain, such as regular exercise. When her diet was no longer designed to encourage overeating, hunger became easier to manage.

- **More are joining the cause for a healthier America —** One of the experts featured in the documentary is Calley Means, a former DC lobbyist. After realizing the harm he has done, he's now working to change the American food system for the better:

  > *"The fact of the matter is that healthy food is sometimes more expensive because of corrupt government incentives. That is the plane that we're on right now. We need to realize that we are in a terrible situation ...*
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  > *It is incumbent on each American to shift our diet more to whole foods. This movement of moms, this movement of parents, this movement of farmers, it makes a big, big difference. And getting more involved with this message that we need to reform our agriculture system, that we need to get to root cause of why we're getting sick.*
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  > *We need to keep that momentum up. When I was sick, I could only think about how much it hurt, how hard life was, and now being healthy. It really means freedom."*

Making Real Food Easy to Find Is Key to a Healthier America

Throughout the course of the film, the Sullivans share that consumers want better food, but find it confusing, time-consuming, and even impossible to get access. But there's still hope because of people like AJ Richards and Brooke Ence, who are leading the charge for change. Richards and Ence founded FromtheFarm.Org, a digital farmers market that bridges Americans directly to local farmers anywhere in the country.

- **Everyday consumers care about what they eat but lack direct connections to producers —** Most people do not have the time or knowledge to search for individual farms. By creating a system like FromtheFarm.Org that brings farmers and customers together in one place, buying real food becomes as easy as buying anything else.

- **The advantages of having a digital farmers market —** FromtheFarm.org helps small producers reach more people without losing their values. Farmers receive support with marketing, education, and logistics, while you gain access to real food. This structure allows small farms to grow without becoming a large, industrial operation, protecting quality along the way.

- **Trust becomes the real product —** The film emphasizes that you are not only buying food. You are buying confidence in where it came from and how it was produced. Education from well-intentioned people plays a key role in helping people break free from Big Food.

Where to Buy High-Quality Food

While the documentary featured several businesses committed to helping Americans become healthy again, they're not the only ones in existence. The list below provides a start that can help you get the food you need, wherever you live:

- American Grassfed Association **—** The goal of the American Grassfed Association (AGA) is to promote the grass fed industry through government relations, research, concept marketing, and public education.

  Their website also allows you to search for AGA-approved producers certified according to strict standards that include being raised on a diet of 100% forage; raised on pasture and never confined to a feedlot; never treated with antibiotics or hormones; born and raised on American family farms.

- **EatWild.com** — EatWild.com provides lists of farmers known to produce raw dairy products as well as grass fed beef and other farm-fresh produce (although not all are certified organic). Here you can also find information about local farmers markets, as well as local stores and restaurants that sell grass fed products.

- **Weston A. Price Foundation** — Weston A. Price has local chapters in most states, and many of them are connected with buying clubs in which you can easily purchase organic foods, including grass fed raw dairy products like milk and butter.

- **Grassfed Exchange** — The Grassfed Exchange has a listing of producers selling organic and grass fed meats across the U.S.

- **Local Harvest** — This website will help you find farmers markets, family farms, and other sources of sustainably grown food in your area where you can buy produce, grass fed meats and many other goodies.

- **Farmers Markets** — A national listing of farmers markets.

- **Eat Well Guide — Wholesome Food from Healthy Animals** — The Eat Well Guide is a free online directory of sustainably raised meat, poultry, dairy and eggs from farms, stores, restaurants, inns, hotels and online outlets in the U.S. and Canada.

- **Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA)** — CISA is dedicated to sustaining agriculture and promoting the products of small farms.

- **The Cornucopia Institute** — The Cornucopia Institute maintains web-based tools rating all certified organic brands of eggs, dairy products, and other commodities, based on their ethical sourcing and authentic farming practices separating CAFO (concentrated animal feeding operation) "organic" production from authentic organic practices.

- **RealMilk.com** — If you're still unsure of where to find raw milk, check out Raw-Milk-Facts.com and RealMilk.com. They can tell you what the status is for legality in your state, and provide a listing of raw dairy farms in your area. The Farm to Consumer

Legal Defense Fund also provides a state-by-state review of raw milk laws.[2] California residents can also find raw milk retailers using the store locator available at RAW FARM.[3]

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Breaking Big Food

Q: What is "Breaking Big Food" about?

A: "Breaking Big Food" is a 2025 documentary exposing how America's food system benefits large corporations while harming consumer health. It follows Patrick and Ashley Sullivan as they investigate ultraprocessed foods and meet local farmers offering healthier alternatives.

Q: How did Patrick Sullivan's cancer diagnosis influence the documentary?

A: Patrick's thyroid cancer diagnosis prompted his family to scrutinize their food choices and eliminate untrusted ingredients. This journey led them to start a clean-ingredient food business and create a documentary to share what they learned.

Q: What alternatives to Big Food does the documentary highlight?

A: The film emphasizes the role of local, traditional producers in keeping America healthy. Companies that follow this philosophy include Good Living Greens, Arizona Grass-Raised Beef Company, Inspire Farms, and Crow's Dairy. These small operations prioritize transparency, quality, and natural raising practices over industrial shortcuts.

Q: How does Big Food influence American eating habits?

A: Big Food heavily markets ultraprocessed foods as fun and harmless, especially to children, shaping unhealthy habits before people understand what they're consuming. Cultural messaging normalizes unhealthy choices while making healthier options seem extreme.

Q: Where can consumers find healthier, sustainably produced food?

A: Resources include the American Grassfed Association, EatWild.com, Weston A. Price Foundation, Local Harvest, Farmers Markets directories, and RealMilk.com. Emerging digital farmers market models like FromtheFarm.Org also connect small producers directly with consumers.

This article is for informational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. Consult a qualified healthcare provider before making changes to your health regimen.

Sources and References

- [1] YouTube, JigsawHealthTV, Breaking Big Food October 19, 2025
- [2] The Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund, State by State Review of Raw Milk Laws
- [3] Raw Farm, Find Raw Dairy Products Near You