

HOPE OR HYPE?

THE FOOD CURE

SIX CANCER PATIENTS. ONE RADICAL DECISION.

A documentary by **SARAH MABROUK**

An **UPWIND PICTURES** and **CHROMOSOM FILM** Production Director of Photography **FREDERIC LAFARGUE** Editor **THOMAS KELLER**
Additional Editing **PATRICK LINDHOF** Music **JESSICA DE ROOIJ** **MAARTEN BUNING** Executive Producers **DAVID LYON** **JOHN LOCKARD**
TOM MCMILLAN **SABINE DOHRN** **EZEDINE HADJ-MABROUK** Associate Producers **AMY THOMASSON** **SYBELLA STEVENS**
Co-Producers **ERIC OUELLETTE** **STANY BERGERON** Producers **ALEXANDER WADOUH** **SARAH MABROUK**

www.thefoodcurefilm.com

#thefoodcurefilm



CHROMOSOM*



CBBB
digital collaborating studio

XIREN

SÖNNENSTUDIO

qo8

Zentralnorden

THE FOOD CURE

PRESS KIT

Original Title: **THE FOOD CURE**

Year of Production: 2018

Duration: 105 min

Director: SARAH MABROUK

Producer: ALEX WADOUH

Genre: DOCUMENTARY, FEATURE

Key Themes: HEALTH, FOOD, NUTRITION, CANCER, FOOD
AS MEDICINE

Original Language: ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN

Country of Origin: USA

Screening Format: DCP

Production Company: UPWIND PICTURES and CHROMOSOM FILM

Upwind Pictures LLC
8702 East 34th Ave.
80238 Denver CO
USA



LOGLINE

Six cancer patients make an unusual choice when faced with with a bad prognosis: they decide to face the disease with a radical plant-based diet. The patients embark on a 5-year journey through uncharted territory as they attempt to eat and juice their way back to health, against all odds.

MEDIUM SYNOPSIS

THE FOOD CURE is a documentary that follows six cancer patients who make the radical choice to “let food be their medicine”. Given a bad prognosis with conventional methods, they decide to undergo a treatment that is based solely on the power of food - mainly fruits and vegetables - to help the body cure itself.

The capability of plants to prevent and cure illness is an ancient idea and central to medicine in both Eastern and Western traditions. But can food alone fight the deadliest disease of our era?

Balanced, objective, and intimate, **THE FOOD CURE** documents the personal struggles, formidable odds, and the arsenal of organic produce that accompanies these ordinary individuals in their extraordinary battles with cancer.

ONE PAGE SYNOPSIS

When faced with a cancer diagnosis and a bad prognosis with conventional treatments, what would you do? In the documentary film **THE FOOD CURE**, six cancer patients make an unusual choice at this junction. Feeling they have little to lose, the patients pin their hopes on controversial nutritional cancer treatments based on a stringent, plant-based diet and a draconian juicing schedule.

In following the patients' stories over more than five years - the point at which cancer patients are recorded as survivors in most statistics - filmmaker Sarah Mabrouk treads virgin ground in taking such an in-depth and long term look at what it is like to use nutritional approaches to treat serious, potentially fatal diseases. Shedding much-needed light on the important and increasingly prevalent topic of food as medicine, the film does not shy away from showing some of the more disturbing consequences of this choice.

People say "you are what you eat", but is the power of food so great that it could actually cure cancer? Upon their return from the clinics, the protagonists face intense challenges at home, where they are expected to continue the therapy on their own for at least two years. Confronted with disapproving doctors, concerned family members, financial troubles, and the constant temptation to tinker with the dauntingly strict diet, they nevertheless attempt to adhere to their unconventional plan, which they see as their last chance.

The principle behind the alternative therapies they choose is that the body's own immune system - when fully functional - can effectively detect and kill cancer cells. By restoring and boosting the immune system through strict diet and detoxification, the theory is that the cancer patient's immune system can be revitalized, therefore resuming its job of selectively destroying cancer cells without harming any other cells.

This concept, once frowned upon by the medical establishment, is similar to the idea behind cutting-edge new immunotherapy drugs that are being heralded as the future in cancer medicine.

Do unusual holistic approaches and high-tech medicine have more common ground than one might think? Could a cure for cancer really be hidden in our immune systems - and in our food?

The film raises important questions about the nature of our food and medical systems, and about the role that lifestyle and nutrition can play in the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases. Providing a rare inside look into the challenges, accomplishments, and disappointments that go hand in hand with swimming against the stream, **THE FOOD CURE** tells an engaging story about what it is like to make a leap of faith when your life is at stake.

THE PROTAGONISTS



Baby Jeremiah

Tanya and Gene are the parents of a 6-month old baby with a rare and aggressive form of cancer. They are faced with the tough choice of following the prescribed 2-year aggressive chemotherapy treatment and risking their child's life from the side-effects, or potentially having their child taken away from them if they reject the doctor's orders and try a holistic nutritional treatment instead. They decide to take their child across the border to a nutritional clinic in Chile, where doctors treat him based on the work of Manuel Lezaeta with a plant-based diet, juices, and saunas and clay packs as detoxification measures.

Fred (Toronto), Marie (Montreal), Christine (France), Michele (Mississippi), and Verena (Switzerland) also decide to defy convention and put their faith in a cancer treatment that was developed by a Jewish doctor in Germany in the early 1920's, originally to treat tuberculosis. Based entirely on a plant-based, salt-, sugar- and toxin-free diet and radical detoxification measures, the Gerson Therapy involves hourly fresh-pressed juices and a low-fat, low protein, high in fruit and vegetables meal plan.



THE CLINICS

Because it is not legal for doctors in the US and Canada to treat cancer patients with a purely nutritional therapy, the protagonists are forced to head to clinics in Mexico, Chile, and Hungary to undergo their chosen treatments.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I first met Marie, one of the protagonists of my documentary **THE FOOD CURE**, in an alternative cancer clinic in Mexico. Like the other, mostly end-stage cancer patients there, she was to be treated with...carrots. Yes, really, carrots. Alongside huge amounts of other fruit and vegetables...around 20 pounds per day. The form of nutrition espoused by the clinic was developed by a German doctor nearly one century ago. Their claim: this diet can boost and restore the body's own immune system to the point that it can resume its natural job of killing cancer cells.

I had come here as a journalist to investigate Mexico's notorious 'cancer belt' - a cluster of alternative cancer clinics that line the Mexican border and attract desperate patients from the US. They come in search of treatments that aren't allowed back home for the sound reason that they are unproven and untested. But most of the people at this clinic had already been through years of chemotherapy or radiation and considered this place to be their very last chance.

I wanted to find out what drove people to make such a radical and potentially lethal choice when their lives were on the line. I also wanted to question the practitioners they had fallen prey to. Did these terminal patients seriously believe that vegetables alone could arrest or reverse their cancer? They did. Was there any cogent or scientific basis for this belief?

My research led me in circles. Cancer authorities such as the NCI and the ACS told me that treatments like these are not FDA approved because there are no scientific studies showing any benefits. The alternative practitioners on the other hand claimed that they work in many cases, but that the pharmaceutical-influenced medical industry did not have any economic interest in conducting studies on this. It was one word against another since neither side could point me to any statistics or credible factual data about the survival rates of patients who choose alternative, non-FDA-approved treatments. All there was to go on were anecdotes. Those about people who had been "cured" miraculously and those about people who had died sooner than necessary after visiting Mexican clinics.

I wanted to delve deeper into this story than a perfunctory dispatch from a journalist constrained by time and missing data would allow. I decided to choke back my own preconceptions about what this story was about and instead to follow real patients over time and let the story unfold before my eyes and the rolling camera. Although six cases by no means represents a large enough sample size from which to draw any reliable scientific conclusions, the outcomes might nevertheless be indicative of what happens to many more patients who make a similar choice. That was the beginning of a 7-year journey following six cancer patients in four different countries.

continued

Marie was a smart, 44-year old osteopathic physician and mother of four who had been diagnosed with two different types of cancer, one of which is an advanced-stage triple negative breast cancer - a particularly aggressive form that tends to spread quickly. She told me that the weeks before coming to the Mexican clinic had been the worst in her life. Her oncologist had recommended an aggressive chemotherapy treatment and warned Marie not to google the side-effects.

Marie disobeyed and read up on the treatment. The low success rates and the potential damage to her vital organs from the chemo sounded like a death sentence to her. She decided to cancel her appointments and head to Mexico instead.

I visited her in Mexico and periodically in her home in Montreal over the next years.

Despite the seeming ease of drinking juices and making salads compared to undergoing chemo and radiation, Marie and the other protagonists in the film did not have an easy time with treatment. On the contrary, they felt that many of the things they loved most and made them who they are had been taken from them: traveling, having coffee with friends, going out to dinner, drinking a glass of wine while watching a movie - almost everything that rendered everyday life enjoyable was strictly prohibited during the two years of treatment. Often they felt like prisoners in their own homes.

It turns out that taking your health "back into your own hands" is not an easy matter. Preparing all the juices, special meals, supplements, and enemas while also dealing with family, work, and all the other engagements of daily life proved to be an almost insurmountable task. Going against the recommendations of doctors and the heartfelt advice of friends and pleading family members when one's life is at risk is not an easy thing to do. And in a society where most aspects of social life are linked to food and drink in some way, being excluded from social activities for such a long time is excruciating.

I developed a deep respect for Marie and the other patients in my film over the next seven years. Whether turning their backs on conventional medicine and choosing a holistic method was the right or wrong decision, it was definitely a courageous and a lonely one.

The film's protagonists are strong, beautiful, and very fun people. I never felt like I was doing a film about cancer or dying. I filmed them as they dealt with exploding juicers, partners and medical tests, laughed with their neighbors, educated their children, cooked beautiful food, and fought for their lives.

The patients taught me a lot about the choices we make. The years with them confirmed what I suspected from the beginning: that they have a mighty story to tell. It's a story that could have repercussions for all of us and that is likely to change the way we view many things, from the food on our tables to the search for a cancer cure and the way modern medicine handles degenerative disease.

- Sarah Mabrouk, Director, 2018



BIOS

SARAH MABROUK DIRECTOR

Sarah Mabrouk holds degrees in journalism and film, and spent ten years working in news, primarily in Europe and the Middle East. She reported on the Iraq war, the Lebanon war, the conflict in Israel/Palestine, the Arab Spring, and Iran. Within the news world, Sarah has worked as a reporter, producer, speaker, camerawoman, production manager, and writer for press agencies, television, and radio. Her clients have included Associated Press, BBC, CNN, Gamma, France 24, Abaca, Agencia EFE, and ZDF. Sarah grew up in Washington, D.C. and speaks fluent English, Arabic, German, French, and Spanish.

ALEXANDER WADOUH PRODUCER

Alexander Wadouh heads the Berlin-based production company Chromosom Film GmbH. His films, including A Coffee in Berlin (distributed in the US) and White Shadow (executive produced by Ryan Gosling), have won more than 50 international awards, among them six German Academy Awards, a European Film Award, the prestigious Dino de Laurentiis Award in Venice. They were sold to more than 30 territories.

FREDERIC LAFARGUE CINEMATOGRAPHER

Frederic Lafargue is an award-winning photographer and cameraman with more than 20 years of experience. He is best known for his work depicting Middle East conflicts, most recently the war in Syria.

THOMAS KELLER EDITOR

Thomas Keller studied film in Bristol and has been working in the creative field since 15 years. He is specialized in editing documentary films and is the editor of The East Complex, The Good American, Out in East Berlin, Colonial Education. He lives and works in Berlin.

CHRISTOPHER STEWARD SUPERVISING EDITOR

Christopher Seward is a documentary filmmaker and consultant with over twenty years of experience. He edited top grossing documentaries like Fahrenheit 9/11, winner of the Palme d'Or at Cannes, and Sicko - both earning Seward awards as the American Cinema Editors Guild as Best Documentary Editor of the year. He has also acted as supervising and consulting editor on films like Fat, Sick & Nearly Dead, Wake Up, and Fire in the Blood.

FULL CREDIT LIST

Writer & Director: SARAH MABROUK

Producers: ALEXANDER WADOUH
& SARAH MABROUK

Associate Producers: AMY THOMASSON
SYBELLA STEVENS

Contributing Co-Producers: ERIC OUELLETTE & STANY BERGERON

Production Asssistants: JAMIE COLLINS-ADAMS
FRANZIS WALTHER
JULIA NIETHAMMER

Editor: THOMAS KELLER

Additional Editing: PATRICK LINDHOF
GENEA GAUDET

Editing Consultant: CHRISTOPHER SEWARD

Photography: FRÉDÉRIC LAFARGUE
SARAH MABROUK
PATRICK LINDHOF

Sound: FRÉDÉRIC LAFARGUE
DANIEL WEINGARTEN
SARAH MABROUK

Sound Design: TOBIAS BILZ

Voice-Over Recording: NIKLAS KAMMERTÖNS / NEUTON

Foley Artist/Studio: Peter Roigk / FX-IT

Foley Recordist **SILVIO NAUMANN**

Cello **ELENA CHEAH**

Guitars **MAARTEN BUNING**

Orchestration **JESSICA DE ROOIJ**

Music Mix **MAARTEN BUNING**

Additional Song Composition **SOUNDSTORIES - PHILIPP SCHAEPER &
CHRISTOPHER COLAÇO**

End Song **"HEAVEN HELP ME NOW" BY XIREN
(AVAILABLE ON ITUNES)**

Illustration **ORLANDO HOETZEL**

VfX Artists **ROB BLAKE
GUIDO MATSCHASS/908 VIDEO**

Digital Colorist **CHRISTIAN KRÖHL/CBBB**

Re-Recording Mixer **MATTHIAS SCHWAB**

Mixing Stage **SONNENSTUDIO BERLIN**

Studio Manager **KATJA SAMBETH**

Archives: NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE, U.S. NATIONAL
ARCHIVES, STADTARCHIV BIELEFELD, BERLIN MUSEUM
OF MEDICAL HISTORY AT CHARITÉ

GERSON INSTITUTE ARCHIVES, GERSON RESEARCH
ORGANIZATION, INSTITUT NATIONAL DE
L'AUDIOVISUEL FRANCE

INSTITUTE FOR ETHICS, HISTORY, AND THEORY OF
MEDICINE AT LUDWIG MAXIMILIAN UNIVERSITY
MUNICH

PARKER INSTITUTE FOR CANCER
IMMUNOTHERAPY

POND 5, VIDEOBLOCKS, ULLSTEIN BILD, WELLCOME
LIBRARY
LAPFV.COM,
DALE PORTER KILLERIMAGE.COM

Private Archives: CHARLOTTE GERSON, TANYA GOMEZ, SUSAN JANE
MORTON

Youtube Cancer Diaries: CHRISTINA NEWMAN, LARYCE MCLAUGHLIN, JENNY
COOPER, DIEM BROWN, AMY KALISHER,
DOMINIC DADDATO, JOHN CARVER,
HOUSEWIFESNOB, LIAM WALDROM

Produced By
UPWIND PICTURES

In CO-PRODUCTION With
CHROMOSOM FILM

Financed with the assistance of: **KICKSTARTER**

© Upwind Pictures, 2018