

Chantel: Hey guys, welcome to this week's episode, and we have a Thin Eater interview today, and today is my aunt who I have interviewed so many times. I've talked to her about what she eats, how she eats. So welcome, Fairy Decatur.

Ferri: Hi Chantel.

Chantel: All right, well today I want you to talk a little bit about your journey and how you were heavier, and now you're very thin. Kind of talk to us about that journey.

Ferri: Oh well, when I was 18, 19 years old, I was gaining weight like crazy. When I first came here to the U.S. I weight 128 pounds. Within the six months, I went to 132 pounds. I was crazy going shopping, coming home crying because I was gaining so much weight.

Chantel: What size clothes were you?

Ferri: I was wearing a size six when I got here, and then I went up to size 10. I know that six, eight pounds should not have made that big a difference, but it did. I remember one time I had gone shopping with you and you were only six years old. It was so much fun. Anyway, I started thinking and worrying about my weight, and I started eating vegetables. Instead of food, I was eating celery, carrots, cauliflower and broccoli was my two out of three meals a day.

Ferri: I started exercising twice a day. Once in the morning, once at night with Jane Fonda's video tape. So I lost the weight and, since 1983, I stayed the same weight, 110 pounds, which was good enough. I wasn't worried about it. I didn't go up and down because I carried on my eating habit. One of the things that I do, that a lot of people might not believe it, I am a very slow eater. I eat whatever I want, whenever I want, but I don't snack during the day.

Ferri: I start my day drinking coffee all morning. I eat when I'm hungry. Sometimes it's 11:00 in the morning, sometimes it's 2:00 in the afternoon. So I don't eat because it's breakfast time, lunch time, dinner time. I just eat when I'm hungry. Sometimes I eat one meal a day. If I eat late in the afternoon. I'm not hungry. I just have a glass of milk or something in the evening.

Ferri: I started, within the last six months or so, I've been drinking a lot of fruit shakes, like mixing bananas, strawberries, blueberries, whatever fruit I have, fresh fruit I have at home, and use Nutribullet, and add a little bit of orange juice to it. I know, I cheat. I put Nutella and peanut butter on it. So I have all kinds of vitamins. I don't take vitamins on a regular basis, or I'm not on any kind of prescriptions. I feel healthy enough.

Ferri: I keep telling everybody eat when you're hungry, eat slow, and make sure you get enough nutrition from natural, healthy food. Don't think about taking vitamins that's going to help you. I don't believe that.

Chantel: So-

Ferri: I'm healthy. Thank God.

Chantel: So talk about how many meals that you eat in a day. Would you say ... So sometimes you say you eat one meal a day. Sometimes you eat two meals a day, and you don't snack. I know that you never eat breakfast. For as long as I've known you, you don't eat breakfast. You just have your coffee in the morning. But how many days a week, if you had to estimate, would you say you just eat one meal a day, and how many days would you say you eat two meals a day?

Ferri: I want to say 75% of the time I eat two meals a day. But like I said, I don't eat a lot. I kind of portion myself. Sometimes they say your eyes are hungrier than your stomach. You put so much on your plate. I don't do that. I put enough so I can eat it. Like I said, eating slow, slow, slow.

Chantel: So I want to ... let's talk about that eating slow because you have been telling me to eat slow since the inception of time. The thing you always say to me is, no one is going to steal the food away from you. Slow down. No one's taking it from you. But I want you to talk about the story of the time that we went to Burger King together. Do you remember that story?

Ferri: Yes, I will never forget any of my time that I spent with you.

Chantel: Talk about-

Ferri: And my [inaudible 00:05:41].

Chantel: Talk about the time we went to Burger King.

Ferri: I don't eat out a lot but, when I do, it's very small. I can never, ever eat a whopper at Burger King. If I just eat half a whopper, I usually get a junior whopper, whopper junior, whatever they call it, and a small fries. I'm fine with that. That time that we went to Burger King, I asked for a junior whopper and Chantel said, yeah I want the same with cheese, and the same thing for Kyle, and fries.

Ferri: We sat down. Before I even take one or two pieces of fries, Chantel was done with hers.

Chantel: But I got the whopper with cheese. I didn't get the whopper junior. You got the whopper junior. I got the entire big whopper and, before you were done with half of your burger, I had already finished the big whopper.

Ferri: How many times have I said every meal that I remember eating with you I keep saying, Chan, slow down. Sometimes, before I sit down, she's done with her meal.

Chantel: Because that is one thing. When we all sit down, for whatever reason, you're still ... if we're at home, you're getting the ketchup or cutting up something else. I feel like you don't even come to sit down for five minutes before everyone else has sat down. That's

why it usually takes me less than a few minutes. Before, it used to take me less than five minutes to eat, so I'd already be done and you'd literally just be sitting down to start your meal.

Ferri: Sometimes I don't know if it's psychological or if that is really true because, when everybody else is done and you're still eating, you feel like oh my God, why am I eating so much.

Chantel: So I want to talk about ... because I've seen you eat, so I see exactly what you eat and kind of how you eat. You really don't deprive yourself. So, when you ... if you want something, you eat it. You kind of started talking about eating a lot of vegetables and fruits, and that's fine, but talk about when you want a burger or you want fries. You don't deprive yourself, so talk about that for just a little bit.

Ferri: I don't. Like I said, I eat what I feel like eating. I don't eat sugar free stuff, fat free stuff, gluten free. I eat what I want to eat. But again, having limits of how much you eat of the same thing. Again, slow down. I don't open the refrigerator and put everything that I take out in my mouth. I try and set up the table to make sure everybody is taken care of. By the time I sit down, like you said, you're almost done with your food.

Chantel: So five days a week, you said approximately you're eating twice a day. Then probably two times a week, you're just eating one meal a day. I want you to talk about how you know that you're satisfied and not stuffed. Do you feel like you ever overeat at all?

Ferri: Once in a while, yes.

Chantel: But if you had to estimate, how often would you say you overeat?

Ferri: Maybe once or twice a month that I don't eat. I get busy with work and everything. I start shaking. That's when I just feel like I eat so much, and then I feel like, oh my God, I'm stuffed. Why did I eat so much?

Chantel: So ... excuse me. Would you say that you ... if you had to say, what are some of your weaknesses? What are some things that you're like, this is something ... I don't do it very often, but if I really want it, I have. What are some of the foods that you love, and how often would you say you eat them?

Ferri: My weakness, the top of the line, is glazed fresh donuts. My husband, he gets what I want. One day, he surprised me. The night before, I said I feel like I haven't had a fresh donut in a while. The next morning, by 10:00, he had crispy fresh donuts on my desk. I eat that maybe I can say, as much as I love it, maybe once a month. That would be too much, but that's my favorite that I can't resist. If it's sitting on my desk, I cannot resist. I eat it. But like I said, I don't eat it every day.

Chantel: So, let's say that he went out on Monday and got you those fresh donuts. Would you have one donut, two donuts?

Ferri: One maximum.

Chantel: So would you say sometimes you might have a half of a donut, or three quarters of a donut?

Ferri: It depends on the size. I don't ... I'm not saying I watch myself, but I can. Candy, I eat candy maybe once every other month. I feel like I sweet tooth, I eat a piece of candy. I have candy sweets around the house all the time because my husband has this sweet tooth. The other day I said, why did you get these donuts? He said, then don't eat them. I said, I can't, but I didn't touch them. I waited, and then I ate only one out of the dozen donuts he had got. One donut.

Chantel: I want you to kind of describe for people ... One of the things I've watched you do is really savor your food. Even when you eat rice, normal people eat with a spoon and kind of take big bites. I want to talk about the way that you eat candy. If you were going to eat an M&M or Skittles, I want you to describe how you eat it and how you savor it, and really eat slowly. Can you try to, as detailed as you possibly can, describe how you eat it?

Ferri: It depends on what I'm eating. I don't put a whole jar of M&Ms on my desk. I take the jar out of the cabinet and take a handful and put it on a plate. As I'm working, I just put a couple in my mouth. I don't put more than one or two M&Ms at a time.

Chantel: Would you say that you suck on the M&Ms and really kind of let them melt?

Ferri: Yeah. I enjoy eating slow. Like rice, a lot of people say how can you just use a fork? I've always used a fork. I can't say all my life, but as long as I remember, I always used a fork because I feel like that's what I've gotten used to. A lot of people, like 99% of the people, use a spoon to eat rice. Rice is my favorite food, but recently within the last five, six years, I want to say every other week I might make rice.

Chantel: So what about when you go to ... What happens if you go to Iran and you visit your family, and they literally have rice at every single meal? Would you ... Do you feel like ... Do you gain weight when you go to Iran to go visit? Do you-

Ferri: Not within the last 20, 30 years. Like I said, I stayed the same weight. I don't. A lot of people say I fill myself up with coffee in the morning, and then I drink coffee all morning. I want to say three to five cups a morning. Then I drink water all afternoon. People say, oh you fill yourself up with coffee and water, but I don't think so because I eat enough. I get enough nutrition.

Ferri: So again, eating slow and eating when you're hungry.

Chantel: So talk about that for just a second of how do you know when your body is physically hungry? What are some of the ... How do you feel when you go, okay now I know I'm hungry?

Ferri: I don't even think about it. I just feel like, okay I feel like eating something. I get up and fix myself. Like I said, it's not the timing. Yes, sometimes I do forget about eating, and then all of the sudden I start shaking. I get the hunger shake. But that doesn't happen that often. Again, coffee fills me up and I always have water at my desk. One or the other will fill me up, but I eat when I'm hungry.

Chantel: So, if you want to stop when you're satisfied, what are some signals that you know, hey I'm starting to get full?

Ferri: Again, like I said, when I fix myself something to eat, I fix enough. When I finish my food, that means I'm full. I kind of look at how much food I put on my plate. I don't take lunch. I work from home. I don't take lunch. I fix something for myself and I sit at my desk. As I'm working, I'm eating too. So like I said, know your limit and how much you think you can eat. I don't know if this is true or not, but my sisters always tell me that, since you haven't eaten for so many years, your stomach has shrunk.

Ferri: You eat a little bit and you say, oh that's it, I'm full. When I'm full, you can't force me to eat anything. I can't even take one extra spoon if I get full.

Chantel: Well you've trained your body so much that you don't like the feeling of being full. So like you said, once a month you might eat a tiny bit more than what you normally do, and you don't like that feeling of feeling more than ... Your definition of stuffed and someone else's definition of stuffed is probably different as well, but you don't like that over full feeling. So maybe once a month you get there and then you go, no I don't want to do that ever again. I want to make sure I eat just enough so I don't feel like I'm overly full.

Chantel: Talk about if you ... how you spend more time ... One of the things I've noticed with you is you spend a lot of time, when we're sitting around at the family table, talking with everyone at the family, and focusing more on the people and enjoying their company, instead of ... One of the things you know for years I've done is, I've just ... I'm not focusing on talking with everyone. I'm so focused on the food while you're more focused on talking with everyone. Talk about that for a second.

Ferri: I feel like you have to kind of ... Again, it comes down to think about what you're doing. If you're just sitting down to eat and get it over with, yes you can do that. But you're sitting around the dinner table. You need to kind of communicate and network. At the same time, you can enjoy your food more and make sure ... it's a part of our customs. That's how we grew up is that to make sure everybody's getting enough. Not that everybody's shy and they're not going to eat enough, but you keep pushing the food, making sure Kyle has enough food, or making sure Ryan can reach and eat more.

Ferri: But having that communication, you're not concentrating on just eating. You're concentrating on other things, and I do believe in multitasking in everything. It's just becoming part of my life.

Chantel: Well, I would say, out of everyone, you talk the most at the family table for dinner, because most of the people are eating. Instead, you're the one doing most of the talking. I want to talk about one of the things that you've taught me is to literally cut my sandwiches or burgers in half. For the most part that I've seen you, if you have a sandwich ... I think one time we got sandwiches from Taste Unlimited or somewhere like that. When you go out, the sandwiches are big now, and almost every time I've seen you, you've cut your sandwich in half and you've only eaten half of the sandwich. What made you decide to ... What got you into that habit of, okay as soon as I start ...

Chantel: You literally, when you start and you kind of push that other half of the sandwich away.

Ferri: Because I believe that wasting food is not good. Also again, I look at the portion that is in front of me, and I try to cut as much as I can eat. I don't take a bite just out of the sandwich. Somebody else might eat the rest of it later. I don't know if this is a habit. There is no way I can go out to eat and not come home with leftovers because I always end up with leftovers. Again, cutting my sandwiches in half is how much I can eat. My eyes can tell me how much is my stomach going to hold, and I don't want to waste the food, so I always cut it. Again, cutting it and enjoying the food is better than just taking bites out of the whole big sandwich and thinking, oh nobody else is going to eat the rest. Let me finish it.

Chantel: So one of the things that I know that I've done, and you've pointed it out to me is ... So we've been at our lunch table and we were eating lunch. Literally I'm like, okay, we haven't even finished lunch yet and I'm already talking about dinner. So I'm going, okay, what do you guys want for dinner. You've pointed out. You're like, Chantel, we're not even done with lunch and you're literally talking about dinner. You're constantly focused on food. You're so in love with food that you're constantly talking about it, and you don't focus on it at all.

Chantel: So you don't even ... So talk about that for a second of how you don't even really think about eating until the second you become hungry. Then you start thinking about it. For me, I'm planning it even while I'm full from the last meal.

Ferri: I know, and it's not just you. I have that issue and I've heard that from my sister and law in California. The moment they wake up, they're thinking about what are we going to have for lunch, what are we going to have for dinner? I'm going, stop thinking about food.

Chantel: You've said that ... You say that all the time because literally one of us usually, literally sometime during the day ... and it's not just me. You're right. They're always like, okay well what are we going to do for dinner? What are we going to do for this? You always have that same response. Let's stop talking about food. Let's stop planning everything of our day around eating. Stop focusing on it.

Ferri: There is food. If you're hungry, you can grab something to eat. You don't have to always worry about it.

Chantel: The other thing-

Ferri: That's the thing that I don't understand why everybody has to kind of worry, worry, worry about food. I don't. I don't even think about it, like you said, until I'm hungry. I always try and find something.

Chantel: One of the things you've taught me is you get more obsessive because, if all you're thinking about is food or what am I going to eat, or what can't I eat, or I can't have this, or I can't have that, you kind of fall in love. One of the things you've said to me is you're falling in love with food because that's all you're focused on. Because I'm not focused on it, I don't have to be obsessive about it.

Chantel: So talk about that for just a second.

Ferri: The thing is, when you go to the grocery store, they say when you're hungry, don't go to the grocery store because you grab more than what you need. I've been there. I've been at the grocery store right before lunch or before when I'm kind of hungry, ready to eat or something. I don't just grab everything. I get what I need. I guess I don't know. I'm different. I can't describe it, but that's the way I am. I can discipline, I can think about other stuff. I don't constantly think about food.

Ferri: If I do think about food, I try to eat healthy. Again, a lot of times people just eat because they have to eat, like my husband. It's morning, it's breakfast time. Come noon, it's lunch time. 5:00, dinner time. Sometimes I eat dinner at 9:00 at night. I don't go with the time.

Chantel: You go with hunger.

Ferri: Go with the hunger.

Chantel: I want you to talk about fasting. I know that your family is Muslim and you grew up ... I want you to talk about Ramadan and how that has impacted you. I know that ... First of all, explain what Ramadan is and explain what Muslim's do for fasting in that month.

Ferri: Ramadan is a month and a year that the Muslims believe that, after eating for 11 months, you need your body to kind of go through cleansing. They came up with fasting. That means fasting from sunrise to sunset. You don't eat anything before the sunrise, and you don't eat anything after the sun sets. Not even water. Eating, drinking, nothing. I used to do it for the whole 30 days in a month. I used to fast, and yes, I was getting dizzy. Yes, a lot of people fast and they sleep most of the day because they can't eat. I don't believe in that, but as I get older ... or I have to be honest, I haven't fasted in the last few years.

Ferri: Actually, the Ramadan just finished last week or so, but I haven't fasted because I feel like my body doesn't need cleansing. And they came up with that Ramadan fasting because they want your body to cleanse and not eat for 12, 13, 14 hours a day.

Chantel: But you ... If you think about it, you do fast every day. If you think about the hours that you actually eat. So think about ... let's take yesterday for example. One of the things that I say is, when I interview people who are thin eaters like you, I say to them ... you know, they have this new term. My book is all about intermittent fasting but, without ... you would never say I do intermittent fasting, but you actually do because most days you eat one meal a day. Sometimes you eat two, but if you think about the hours that you eat, usually you'll eat around 1:00 or 2:00, and then you're only eating in a six hour window.

Chantel: If you started eating at 2:00, by 8:00 you're not eating again. So, if you actually look at the hours that you are physically eating, you're really only eating in a six hour window for the most part.

Ferri: Yeah, like yesterday. Let's take this as an example. Yesterday I had some errands to run. I went out, I came back. It was like almost 12:00 and I wanted to watch the U.S. women's soccer team playing in France at 12:00.

Chantel: Okay.

Ferri: So I felt like, do I really want to eat? I made myself a fruit shake. I had that around 12:00/12:15 while I was watching the soccer game, which they did a great job. Go U.S. women's! I watched that game. At 5:30, a quarter to 6:00, I was getting kind of feeling like I want to eat something, because that's all I had had. By 6:00, I fixed a chicken fajita sandwich. I ate that at 6:30, and what time is it now? Almost 11:00, I haven't had a thing.

Chantel: Right, but what I've noticed with you ... if I look at it, every time I've watched you, you eat in a six hour window. So, if you just describe yesterday, you said you ate around 12:15/12:30. You had your shake, and then you ate ... that was your first little snack or whatever, like a little mini meal. Then the next meal was a bigger meal, and you had it at 6:00. So 12:30 to 6:30 was your eating window. It was six hours.

Chantel: So again, what I've noticed with you that you do is you eat kind of a small ... if you eat twice a day, you're eating something small at one meal, and then you're eating something medium sized at your second meal. If you only eat once a day, you eat one large meal that day, and that ties you for the full 24 hours. So sometimes you eat 12:00 to 6:00. Sometimes you eat 2:00 to 8:00. Sometimes you might do 4:00 to 10:00. It just depends on the day, but it depends on hunger. But if you look at your track record, because I've watched you, you pretty much, without even mentally knowing it, you're eating ... You don't think about it, but if you track it, you're eating in about a six hour window, either once a day, either twice a day. It's either one small and one medium, or one large meal every single day. Would you agree with that?

Ferri: Absolutely.

Chantel: So this is exactly how I've kind of gotten all my data for my book is people like you that I've interviewed in detail, and going what do you do breakfast, lunch and dinner. Let's



talk about ... In books, people say you should wait 20 minutes do decide if you're full or if you're hungry. I think the difference with you is you usually take about ... The reason why you can sense that you're full is because you usually do take a full 20 minutes to eat.

Chantel: Would you say you take about maybe 15 minutes sometimes, 10 minutes? How long would you say it really takes you to eat?

Ferri: Sometimes I do look at the clock because there's certain things I want to do, certain shows I want to watch. I look at the clock to see how much more time I have. Sometimes it takes me 15 minutes. The minimum, minimum time that it takes me is 15 minutes to eat.

Chantel: So between 15 to 20 minutes.

Ferri: It takes me like 30 minutes, but it depends on what I'm eating.

Chantel: I want to talk about ... So one of my friends, Catherine Maldoon, she talks about how she eats ice cream. When she says she eats ice cream, this is how she describes it. She says she takes the top of the ice cream, and she takes it and she brushes over the top, and then eats it. Then she literally says, if you look at her ice cream, it looks like rail road tracks because she went like this, took a little bite. She savored it.

Chantel: I want you to kind or really think about anything that you eat and how you savor it, to describe it in as much detail as you possibly can.

Ferri: Again, I feel like, if you eat slow and chew your food, first of all, you're going to taste the food a lot better. Sometimes you put the food, spoon of rice in your mouth, and the next thing you're swallowing it. You're not chewing the food to enjoy it. Eating slow causes you to chew before you put the next spoon, fork, whatever full of rice in your mouth.

Ferri: When I eat, like ice cream, very seldom I eat ice cream, I put one scoop in an ice cream cone, and I try to enjoy it. Take one lick at a time. Don't take a big bite out of the whole ice cream cone. Take a lick, make sure you're enjoying it, eating it slow. I cannot ... like I said, eating slow, small portions, enjoying the food.

Chantel: One of the things you said to me, that I've really never forgotten, is you said your stomach doesn't have teeth. You can't chew your food, you can't in your stomach. You can't do it. If you think about that, it really is powerful because I watch you, and how many times would you say do you chew your food? If you were going to take a bite of steak, how many times would you say you're really chewing that food before you actually swallow it?

Ferri: How big a bite do you put in your mouth?

Chantel: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ferri: Sometimes, like I said, I cut my steak pieces into small pieces and chew it five, six times to make sure I get the taste of the food. When, like you said, if I chew it, I can digest it better. So again, eating slow, small portions, and chewing it helps a lot. Like I said, I'm not ... I have been the same weight going on six, seven years. I started losing some weight, and now I stay the same. I don't go up and down. I don't take any kind of supplement vitamins. I don't take any medication. Thank God, I'm as healthy as I can be.

Chantel: That's great.

Ferri: No doctors. I don't have a good relationship with doctors.

Chantel: Last question. So a lot of times when people are stressed, people eat for different reasons. One of the things about you that you've said is that you only eat for physical hunger. If you're happy or if you're stressed out, you don't run to food when you're stressed. Why do you think that that is? Do you feel like before, when you did have a weight problem and you were heavier than you wanted to, do you feel like when you were stressed you did eat?

Ferri: A little bit, yes. That comes into play a lot, because I know people that, when they are stressed, they constantly think that they can reduce their stress by eating. I work with people. They go, oh I couldn't take that call anymore. I had to have chocolate. But I just take a deep breath, and that does cause a lot of people gaining weight because they keep thinking they're stressed and they make everything a big deal. They don't take a deep breath and say slow down. You constantly create more stress for yourself, and that causes you to eat more.

Chantel: Well, you truly have been an example for me. I would say that, as far as ... there's been tons of times where we've all sat down as a family to eat lunch, and you've looked at everyone, and you've said, I'm not hungry, so I'm not going to eat. Everyone's like, oh just eat. Everyone around the table says something like, oh just eat a little bit. Come on, just have a small plate. You're very adamant. You go, I'm not hungry. When I'm hungry, I'm going to eat. You've don't this repeatedly over and over, and I've been able to watch that and model that.

Chantel: People would say ... people who have eating issues, they would say to you, but don't you feel like ... I've heard this from lots of people where we talk about ... they go, I know I'm not hungry, but I just feel guilty. They made all this food. So handle that objection. So, when someone says that to you, because you're so good at it. You're like, no, I'm not hungry. I'm not going to eat. So how do you process that when someone says, well do you feel like you're being rude? How would you answer that question?

Ferri: I feel like I have tried to be honest. If I'm not hungry, I can't eat. If I don't enjoy the food, I shouldn't be eating it. I can sit there and pretend I'm eating, but why? I am the type of person that I eat when I'm hungry. I enjoy the food when I eat. I know sometimes people take it personally, thinking that I'm not eating because I don't like their cooking

or I don't ... but I do eat when I'm hungry, and they do realize that, and thank God most of the people around me have gotten to know me. When I say I'm not hungry, I mean it.

Chantel: I think that's true. I would say, for a couple years, I remember people trying to get you to eat where they'd be like, oh come on, just have a little. Now, no one does anymore because they know, no matter what we say, she's not going to eat anyway. So, for so many years, I remember that no one even says that to you anymore. You say no, I'm not hungry, and that's the end of it.

Ferri: Yep, because they know I eat and I'm not shy about getting up, opening the refrigerator. No matter where I am, at your place or California, or my sisters. I get up if I'm hungry. I grab something and I eat it. But I have to be hungry to eat.

Chantel: Well, thank you so much for being on our show today, and I know that this podcast is going to impact lots of ladies, because somehow when people hear it from different people, and they say it in different ways, it kind of clicks. So hopefully that clicks for you today, that you should eat when you're-

Ferri: It hasn't clicked with you yet. No, just kidding. After 40-some years, but it was-

Chantel: You say it over and over. I'm eating a lot slower than I used to, that's for sure.

Ferri: I hope so. You need to work on that, and work on with Kyle. I love you all.

Chantel: Love you. Have a great day. And if you have a question that you want answered, go to [questions@chantelrayway.com](mailto:questions@chantelrayway.com).