

**HOT DOG  
CHAMPION  
JOEY  
CHESTNUT  
IS AN  
AMERICAN  
HERO**

**BY EMMETT BEGGS**

The most American event of the year is the Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest. A lineup of freaks gather each year to put as many hot dogs and buns into their bodies as they can within ten minutes. None of them compare to Him. Joey Chestnut is a real human man capable of fitting enormous quantities of hot dogs into himself very quickly. He looks like he was born for this. 2025 is his great return to hot dog eating after a year of being unjustly banned for promoting a meatless hot dog brand. This man has fascinated me to a degree no normal human can. At the event there is a crowd that seems to extend forever, and a very long stage with a very long table. The eaters line up to be cheered onstage. A large portion of the video is spent on showcasing these men who will become irrelevant as soon as Joey Chestnut shows up. The hot dog announcer says their names and notable feats they've achieved in the world of competitive eating by way of introduction. Obscene amount of food after obscene amount of food. Ten pounds of baked beans in one minute forty five seconds. Eighty three slices of pizza. The first contestant holds two master's degrees in classical trumpet performance. Already

they're alluding to Him before he's even been seen by the camera. They call him Saint Joseph Chestnut. Thirty four donuts. Two gallons of chili. One of the contestants made a chatbot to text his girlfriend so that he could save more time to eat. Another claims his first words were "huevos rancheros". A twenty one year old who looks like every lacrosse player at my high school looks in the camera and flexes at me. Two hundred and seventy five jalapeños in eight minutes. One man's title is "Donut Specialist and Tamale Champion". I feel like a fucking alien. A contestant was born in Ranch Dressing, Arkansas. Two hundred and seventy six buffalo wings. Another calls himself "The Red Horse of Death". He has a red beard and is the only contestant to be visibly overweight. Fifty hard boiled eggs in three minutes and four seconds. One contestant's introduction begins with "Between weekly meal prep, sunrise yoga, and mindfulness training, he barely has time to write in his gratitude journal. But when he does, he is thankful that he was born with an abnormally large esophagus that runs from his pie hole to his gut like a sewer pipe." The next has a red white and blue one inch tall mohawk. Two gallons of baby food.

Someone in the audience holds up a t-shirt that says “It’s a bad day to be a hot dog”. Twenty one pounds of grits in ten minutes.

The announcer says “We are humbled by age in preparation for the great insult of death,” and I feel like I am going insane. Forty two dozen oysters. Twenty four pounds of strawberry shortcake. He is wearing a boater hat with a red white and blue ribbon, and a suit. He is dressed impeccably for the job he is about to oversee. He is Charon on the boat of the River Styx sending you to Hot Dog Hell. Finally, we see Him. He looks like your dad looking for a parking spot. He looks like he is stretching to run a marathon in his Nathan’s Hot Dog shirt. He knows what he’s here to do. The crowd goes wild as the announcer screams his name. Last year, he was barred from participating due to sponsoring a non Nathan’s brand of meatless hot dog. The hot dog boys stand behind the eaters with matching blue polos and plates of replacement dogs at the ready. Pretty girls with tennis skirts and big smiles hold up signs to track each eater’s progress. The announcer yells “GO!” and Joey goes ham on those dogs. From this point onward the camera only cares about him.

At some point we all forget that there are other contestants. His eyes close with each swallow, pained. He crushes the buns with water in his hands before eating them. A strategy that has won him sixteen championships thus far. Twenty six hot dogs. He begins to sweat. I am nauseated. A commentator says the other contestants have a sense of defeatism. Wouldn't you? Thirty four hot dogs. Other contestants' faces are splattered with hot dog grime. The girls with the scores continue to smile despite what's happening right in front of them. I am in awe of their strong stomachs. My body hurts from watching the gluttony and speed of hot dogs being scarfed down. I didn't know that could happen. Five minutes left, the commentators remark on how people slow down in the last half. Understandable. Forty six hot dogs. The camera looks up at Him, glistening and spitting. He's swallowing those dogs like a bird choking down a worm. The commentators have a moment of silence before simply concluding: "Joey".

Fifty four hot dogs, around twelve pounds, one of the commentators reasons. I think about the physical sensation of lifting a ten pound weight. The

hot dog boys wait eagerly to replenish the dogs. The commentators start talking about Elon Musk. Two minutes left. Sixty hot dogs. People in the audience look impressed? Nervous? Scared? Entertained? Joey Chestnut looks like he's praying to God. Less than a minute left. He keeps his hand in front of his mouth as much as he can, and when he removes it I understand why. His bun-stuffed mouth is grotesque. His bulging veins are grotesque. I think about how I struggle to eat one hot dog in a single sitting. Zero seconds left. Seventy and a half hot dogs. He's the champ. This man is the undisputed king of hot dogs. The announcer calls him a one man dynasty. Seven hot dogs a minute. That's more than one hot dog every ten seconds. I want you to imagine yourself eating a hot dog. How long does it take? How full are you after? The man who won second place ate forty six and a half hot dogs. God. Could you imagine?

One of the commentators says, "Such neat eating. The etiquette is just exemplary." I can't tell if they're being sarcastic. The Hot Dog Champion downs a drink (presumably water) from a twenty four ounce cup. They begin to announce the winners. Mr.

Chestnut looks visibly distressed. He winces in pain. adjusts his Nathan's brand shirt. They talk about him like a God. He is pink. He is sweaty. He smiles grimly.

The audience erupts and music blares. They hand him a belt bigger than his head and a dish with even more hot dogs, presumably to represent what is currently inside his digestive tract or to taunt him.

He breathes heavily. He tells the crowd that he wishes he ate more. I am physically sickened. A woman interviews him, asking what it took for him physically and mentally. He responds with word salad. In another interview he describes the sensation as "literally being drunk on hot dogs". She calls the belt The Mustard Belt. He mentions training. I can't imagine what training for this event could feel like. The commentators call him The Michelangelo of Mastication, the Caravaggio of Consumption. Youtube comments call him The Glizzy Goat. What does he do now? What happens to Joey Chestnut on July 5th? It is tempting to say that he must shit his brains out. As stomach churning as that ordeal is, it's almost worse if he doesn't react so violently. If he gets up the next day unharmed that means that his body is capable of withstanding

seventy and a half hot dogs. He is history's most impressive eater since Tarrare. He is the people's hot dog champion. This is not even his highest hot dog count. Saint Joseph Chestnut is a Goddamn American.