

Sports

Thanks, Nathan's, for making me a burger guy

■ Initial exposure to the Super Bowl of competitive eating extinguished any appetite for the American icon, the hot dog

The Fourth of July weekend is easily one of the highlights of summer. People get together with family and friends, watch some glowing fireworks big and small, and eat some great food, often straight from a barbecue grill. Basking in this celebration of patriotism growing up, nothing could phase me until one year, while waiting to go to my cousins' house, my brother turned on something that would change my taste buds forever.

The Nathan's Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest.

Every year on Independence Day, thousands gather at Nathan's most famous restaurant in Coney Island, New York, to watch some of the top competitive eaters prove who is the bigger glutton for punishment as they vie to eat the most hot dogs, and buns, in 10 minutes to determine the winner. The contest dates to 1916, and in recent memory we have watched Takeru Kobayashi and, more recently, Joey "Jaws" Chestnut accomplish



COREY KIRK

incredible feats of eatery.

(The 2021 contest happened in a minor league baseball stadium.)

Watching the event, however, is for me like watching two trains crash in slow motion during a movie.

These competitors shove hot dogs down their throats with a bare amount of chewing, and they dip the buns in water to make them easier to go down. After watching this for 10 minutes straight, I lost all desire to pick up a hot dog, immediately cementing myself as a burger guy for the rest of my life.

Thanks, Nathan's.

Competitive eating is easily the most impressive and scary craft I have ever laid my eyes on. Not only do these people learn to train their stomachs, but they have to teach themselves how to eat in rhythm to keep pace. While I can barely maintain a brain

freeze after taking a sip of a slushie on a hot summer day, Chestnut was able to scarf down 76 hot dogs and buns in 10 minutes in this year's contest, beating his record — by one dog and bun — from 2020.

While most athletes focus on keeping their body toned to remain in shape for what they hope is a long career, professional eaters have to maintain a workout regimen to keep themselves essentially alive. While Chestnut focuses on running and yoga, Kobayashi stuck to a serious weight lifting regimen to remain in top physical shape.

Though I understand that a hot dog is a serious American staple, just like a slice of apple pie, Nathan's Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest has skewed my opinion of hot dogs for the rest of my life.

I will happily prepare my cheeseburger, sit down amongst good company and enjoy the festivities.

So, thanks again, Nathan's.

Corey Kirk is the Baker City Herald's sports editor.



David Dee Delgado/Getty Images/TNS

Competitive eating champion Joey "Jaws" Chestnut wins the 2021 Nathan's Famous 4th of July International Hot Dog Eating Contest on July 4, 2021, with 76 hot dogs, breaking his personal best record of 75, set in 2020.

'Jaws' wins 14th hot dog eating contest, sets record

NEWYORK (AP) — Chowdown champ Joey "Jaws" Chestnut broke his own record to gulp to a 14th win in the men's Nathan's Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest on Sunday, July 4, while Michelle Lesco took the women's title.

Chestnut downed 76 franks and buns in 10 minutes. That's one more than he did in setting the men's record last year, when the contest unfolded without fans because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"It just felt good," Chestnut, of Westfield,

Indiana, said in an ESPN interview after his win Sunday. "Even if I was uncomfortable, having everybody cheer me and push me, it made me feel good."

The annual Fourth of July frankfurter fest normally happens outside Nathan's flagship shop in Brooklyn's Coney Island neighborhood. But this year's planning took place amid shifting coronavirus restrictions, and the event was held in a nearby minor league baseball stadium, Maimonides Park, with 5,000 spectators.

RACES

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The sidewalks were packed all day with locals and out-of-towners eating, chatting and watching the cyclists zoom around and around the block for hours. For me, it was the first time I felt we were truly coming out of this pandemic and returning

to normalcy in large group settings.

Sunday's racers started bright and early at 7:30 a.m., following the same route as Friday but backwards and with an extra 12 miles at the end. I sat in the passenger seat of a car as a radio operator while the driver's son won the race in his category. I filmed the last five minutes of the race on the father's iPhone as he whooped

and cheered for his 16-year-old boy, who he had been riding with for the past two years. While this year was Gabriel Love's first Baker City Cycling Classic, it most definitely was not his last.

The panting, triumphant bicyclists finished up their ride near Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort, where they were greeted with chili and congrat-

ulations. Photos were taken of the first, second and third place winners in each category as people milled about in the unseasonable heat. Luckily everyone stayed hydrated and there were no serious injuries or significant crashes throughout the course of the event.

Watching these riders made me want to get back into spin classes

and push my body to half of the limit that these athletes did over the weekend. I feel very fortunate to have gotten a crash course in long distance cycling, and to have shared a special moment with a proud father that neither of us will ever forget.

Race results are posted at www.bakercitycyclingclassic.com/results.

SURVIVORS

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Wyden added, "I have always believed in the right of law-abiding citizens to own guns. Domestic abusers are not law-abiding citizens. They are cruel criminals who the United States Senate should agree should not have guns. ... If my legislation had been in place in 2014, Nicolette might still be alive and raising her two daughters."

Blumenthal said the bill, by strengthening protective orders and ensuring guns are removed from abusers, will save lives.

"When a gun is available, domestic violence is five times more likely to turn deadly for women. Closing this dangerous loophole and supporting local efforts to keep weapons out of the hands of abusers will protect domestic violence survivors," he said in a statement.

Jackson, 32, the mother of two, fled her home with her children and moved in with her mother in Oxford. The day before the hearing was scheduled for a permanent restraining order, her husband killed her and injured her mother using a gun he legally possessed because a permanent protective order wasn't yet in place.

"It's hard to imagine what a family goes through when something like this happens,"

"I have always believed in the right of law-abiding citizens to own guns. Domestic abusers are not law-abiding citizens"

— U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore.

said Merry Jackson, Lori Jackson's mother. "It never goes away, it's with you forever. But if you could save another family and kids from losing their mom, it would mean the world to me."

The bill also would extend protections to domestic violence survivors who have been abused by dating partners.

Federal law now fails to protect survivors from armed dating partners, even though half of intimate partner homicides are committed by dating abusers, according to Ruth Glenn, president of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

It would direct law enforcement agencies to ensure abusers subject to restraining orders surrender or sell any guns or ammunition in their possession, that their permits or licenses to buy a gun are revoked and that a background check is done before they get their guns and ammunition back.

"The most dangerous time with an abusive partner is when the survivor takes steps to leave, which steps often include petitioning for an ex parte protective order," Glenn said.



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