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Should We Ban Competitive Eating?

Joey Chestnut set a record for eating 69 hot dogs and buns in 10 minutes.

Puking. Choking. Wasting food.
Is it time for this wacky tradition to end?

BY SARAH MCCARRY WITH ADEE BRAUN

The clock is ticking. David Brunelli has just scarfed down a huge burger. Now all he has to do is polish off a pile of fries and a jug of water and he could win this competition. The crowd roars excitedly as he furiously downs fistfuls of fries.

Suddenly, a stream of food spews from his mouth. Thinking fast, he cups his hands, catching the vomit,

and shoves it back in his mouth. He knows the rules: Puking means disqualification.

Welcome to the world of competitive eating.

Brunelli is part of a **select** group of competitors who **vie** for the glory of eating massive quantities of food as quickly as possible. In thousands of contests around the world each year, competitive eaters devour

everything from tubs of chili cheese fries to vats of baked beans.

Eating contests may seem like harmless fun, but they have a dark side—and some critics are saying it's time for them to stop.

It's Tradition

Shoving crazy amounts of food down our throats is nothing new. **Gorging** banquets were a regular part of ancient Roman culture. Meat-eating contests appear in Icelandic mythology from the 1200s. In the 1800s, some New York City politicians settled bets through eating challenges. Pie-eating contests have been a Fourth of July tradition for more than a century.

For pros like Brunelli, though, eating contests are more than tradition. They are a path to fame and fortune. Major League Eating (MLE), which oversees professional contests, **doles** out thousands of dollars in prize money each year. Winners can also earn big bucks in sponsorship deals. World-famous eater Takeru Kobayashi is reportedly worth a million dollars.

Is It Safe?

But prize money does nothing to reduce the health risks of competitive eating, which include obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and severe stomach problems.

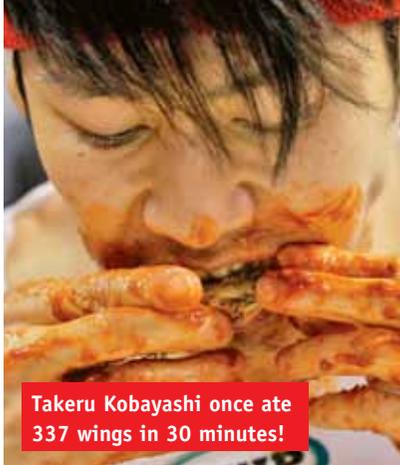
Competitive eating can even be life-threatening. In 1991, a man in Virginia suffered a stroke after eating 38 eggs in 29 seconds; in 2004, a Japanese woman choked

to death during a rice cake-eating contest. In Florida, in 2012, a man died shortly after winning a cockroach- and worm-eating contest—leading a group of doctors to call for a ban on eating contests.

Fans of competitive eating are quick to point out that such tragedies are rare. Plus, they say, events **sanctioned** by the MLE are strictly regulated and always have medical personnel on hand.

Here to Stay

In any event, the risk to



Takeru Kobayashi once ate 337 wings in 30 minutes!

competitors is only part of the story. Nearly two-thirds of Americans are overweight, and competitive eating sets a terrible example by **glamorizing** overeating. And, in a world where 805 million people

go hungry every day, downing ridiculous quantities of food for entertainment seems not just wasteful but **callous**.

For now, though, it seems eating contests are here to stay. Last year, more than three million viewers tuned in to ESPN to watch Nathan's Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest. This year, new records have been set: Matt Stonie ate 182 strips of bacon in 5 minutes, breaking the world record.

What record will be broken next? Do you really want to find out? ●

What Do You Think?

Should we ban competitive eating? Write evidence from the article to support each side of the debate.



YES

Ban competitive eating!

- 1 *Competitive eating promotes wasting food.*
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

NO

Competitive eating rocks!

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

EXAMINE POINTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DEBATE—AS WELL AS YOUR OWN BELIEFS. State your opinion in one sentence below. This can become the thesis statement for an argument essay.

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