



PRESS KIT

MARY BOWERS

WORLD RANKED COMPETITIVE EATER



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Born in Korea, and raised in the United States by an American family, Mary Bowers was inspired from childhood to create connections across borders.

After receiving her degree in architecture, she specialized in design and construction of high-profile cross-border investment projects for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Her expertise in political policy and international relations are skills she now applies to her work as a professional athlete and entertainer.

Since joining the Major League Eating rankings in 2012, Mary has remained one of the world's top 50 athletes in her sport. As of 2023, the eight time Nathan's Famous Hotdog Eating Contest finalist will become the first in history to represent the Republic of Korea in the international event.

In addition to her athletic accomplishments, Mary has entertained audiences through television, radio, and printed publications around the globe. Whether at home in Korea or the United States, Mary is a well-qualified advocate for improving the quality of life worldwide through the universal languages of food, sports, and performing arts.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARY BOWERS



HOW DID YOU START EATING COMPETITIVELY?

One of my first and happiest memories is of my grandmother decorating a birthday cake, so food has always held a magical charm. But I have recently learned that my attraction to it may have much darker origins. I spent the first five months of my life in an adoption home, which is now under investigation by Korea's Truth and Reconciliation Commission for a number of alleged humanitarian crimes - including experimentation with nutrition. I don't know if I am here by fate or by design, but in either case I'm now in a position to shape the course of my future. That's the real magic. It's in the power to shape who we are. The question then is, who would we like to be? How can we demonstrate values like integrity, kindness, equality, and justice?

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WHAT ATTRACTS YOU TO COMPETITIVE EATING?

Competitive eating is a ten minute period of time when I can experience highs, lows, strength, weakness, joy, and pain all within a few short moments. I think that's why it connects so strongly with the audience. It's life, in an instant.

I spent a lot of my childhood wishing to be someone else - taller, faster, stronger. The drive to reach those goals has helped me to become one of the best eaters in the world. What I didn't understand then, was that realizing my dreams would come from looking inward, rather than outward. I have no control over others and what they achieve, but I can put in the work to be the fastest, strongest, and best version of myself. And yes, I *can* be taller. That's why I wear heels and platforms. Any dream is possible when you're willing to find a way.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR A CONTEST?

Competitive eating is no different than other sports. The better condition I'm in, the better I'll perform. Some days, I focus on improving strength, other days its technique or endurance. The majority of the sport is mental and emotional. It's about pressing forward when you feel like you can't possibly keep going. It's really about fortitude and resilience. Those are the skills that matter most.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO BECOME THE FIRST ATHLETE TO REPRESENT KOREA IN THE NATHAN'S FAMOUS INTERNATIONAL HOTDOG EATING CONTEST?

I am proud to be Korean-American. It has been a privilege to represent the United States as a competitive eater and it is still very much a part of who I am. But before I became an American, I was (and will always be) Korean first.

It has taken me a long time to understand the effects of being separated from my original family, culture, and language. Returning to Korea has been empowered me to take back some of the things that I lost, but the ones that matter most may ultimately be irreplaceable.

In my quest to become faster, stronger, taller, smarter, prettier, and every other "-er", there is part of me that believes I have to prove myself in order to loved. Or worse, that I have to prove myself to avoid being abandoned.

Since I was small, I've dreamed of becoming famous enough that my biological family might see me one day. I've tried to make myself "good enough" that they might even want me. It's not a healthy mindset, but I think a lot of adoptees can understand it.

Representing Korea is my way of reclaiming part of what was taken from me when I was a baby. If I cannot belong to my Korean family, then I am going to belong to the Korean people, just as much as they belong to me.

WHAT CAN FANS LOOK FORWARD TO AT THE CONTEST ON JULY 4TH?

If fans learn anything from competitive eating, it is that nothing is impossible. The current record for hotdog eating is 76 in ten minutes, held by Joey Chestnut (USA) for the men's division and 48.5, held by Miki Sudo (USA) for the women's in the same amount of time.

I think my family, friends, and fans in the U.S. will be excited to see me return to the table after time away during the pandemic. I plan to bring the runway to the buffet with the food-themed fashion they have come to know and love.

For the audience in Korea, I'm excited to introduce what is soon to be an incredibly popular sport. South Korea is the home of mukbang. We have some of the best eating talent in the world. Nathan's is mukbang at speeds of 7.6 HDB (hotdogs and buns) per minute.

I'm training hard and ready to set a new personal best. I hope to make my country proud.



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