



PRESS KIT

MARY BOWERS

WORLD RANKED COMPETITIVE EATER

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As the #1 ranked competitive eater in Korea and currently #39 in the world, Mary Bowers is one of Major League Eating's most recognizable personalities.

Known for her appetite for success, she has also become an accomplished entertainer and human rights advocate. Mary has graced the screen on numerous TV shows, including Netflix's *Squid Game: The Challenge*, *America's Got Talent*, *Dodgeball Thunderdome*, and *The Gong Show*. Before rising to fame, she was a contractor for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Mary's dedication to nutrition education and hunger relief has earned her recognition from the U.S. House of Representatives, the State Senate of California, and the City of Los Angeles. More recently, her essays on human rights have been presented to the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the National Assembly of Korea.

In 2024, Mary will be making her ninth appearance at the Nathan's Famous International Hotdog Eating Contest, bringing her competitive spirit and determination to the world stage once more.



 Jerry Phan

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARY BOWERS



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HOW DID YOU START EATING COMPETITIVELY?

I like to tell people that I saw a sign. In hindsight, it might have been the supernatural kind, but it didn't feel that way at the time. It said "hotdog eating contest". I hadn't eaten dinner yet and there was only one place remaining at the table, so I signed up. What I thought would be a local contest was a qualifying event for a final round with Takeru Kobayashi.

Thirteen years later, here I am, the #1 competitive eater in Korea and among the Top 50 athletes in my sport. I'd like to say I'm fearless, but I am actually quite chicken. I love what I do more than the anxiety. Competitive eating has created so many possibilities that I would not have been able to pursue otherwise. It's a privilege to be here, especially after all this time. I don't take it for granted.

WHAT ATTRACTS YOU TO COMPETITIVE EATING?

Competitive eating has taught me to expect the unexpected. No matter how much I practice or strategize, there are things that will always be out of my control. Weather conditions, food temperature, how well other competitors perform - those are all outside my hands. So I have to have faith in the things that I do know.

Both on and off the stage, there are some days that make me feel completely sick to my stomach. Not every day is going to be my day, but by constantly challenging myself to adapt and improve, this has certainly become my decade. It's rewarding to do something that requires long-term effort.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR A CONTEST?

To be honest, I have had a lot on my plate. I don't feel as physically prepared as I would like. Typically, I would be doing a lot more practice rounds, stretching my stomach, and pushing more limits.

It's been a difficult couple of years for me. I went back to Korea to search for my biological family and discovered that my adoption as a baby was likely illegal. There is no proof that my biological parents ever consented. Many of my documents may have been falsified. There is currently an investigation into nearly 400 other adoptions that occurred under similar conditions.

Because of that, I know I'm not at my eating best. But I also know that my friends, fans, and co-competitors are here to support me. It means the world to my family to have that. We're thankful for the love we've received from around the world.

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

I've gotten this question a lot since my adoption story started circulating in the press. Or at least a version of it. "Why would you want to represent Korea at all, after what happened to you?"

For good or for bad, Korea is where I am from. I didn't choose to be born there, any more than I chose to be sent to the United States. But they are both home to me.

To me, reclaiming my Korean identity has been a lesson in unconditional love. It takes courage to acknowledge the darkest parts of humanity. It doesn't mean that we can't advocate for change. We should. But we cannot move forward if we do not first understand where we began.

We are not citizens of only the positive parts of a country. We are citizens of the whole country. I am proud to be Korean-American.

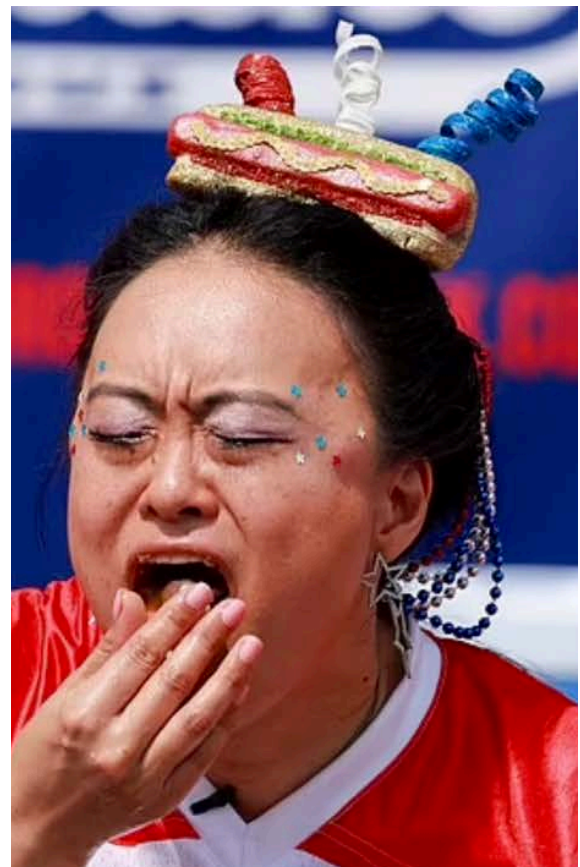
WHAT CAN FANS LOOK FORWARD TO AT THE CONTEST ON JULY 4TH?

Even though I know millions will be watching, for me this year's contest is for an audience of one. After 19 years of separation, seven DNA tests, and a lot of heartbreak, my little brother Chase will be able to watch his big sister competing on ESPN.

When I was a kid, I used to imagine if I got famous enough, maybe someday my family would see me and we could be together again. In reality, it hasn't been quite so simple. My dream needed a lot of help, a lot of love, and a bit of luck.

In the weeks before Nathan's last year, Crazy Legs Conti agreed to have multiple DNA kits delivered to his apartment. After I arrived in New York, Michelle Lesco and Katie Prettyman sat in my hotel room and debated whether I had spit enough into the testing tubes. The day after the contest, I hopped on a plane to LA to meet with government officials to talk about human rights, praying that I didn't still smell like hotdogs. About a month later, the impossible happened and I found my brother.

So, what can fans look forward to this year? If my life is any indication, they can expect nothing short of miracles.



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