

Boggling
BroadcastSwallow this
absurdity

While scouring CNN's Web site for lovely bits of news to discuss, I am naturally inclined to skim over its list of links under "Latest News" first. Much of the list consists of economical woes or other political news. What caught my eye on a recent visit to the site, however, was neither of these. It was a link titled "Man stuffed with corned beef wins \$5K." Seeing that articles important enough to deserve a spot under "Latest news" are usually serious and informative, I initially misinterpreted this as the title to a story concerning a vegetarian man who had been assaulted with corned beef and hence won a \$5,000 suit against the perpetrator.

Boy was I wrong.

Seconds after I clicked on this link, a video appeared of several pot-bellied men and one woman savagely stuffing their faces with some sort of beef sandwich in a manner that was hardly civilized. With their bodies leaned forward in butcher stance, the contestants went about literally choking themselves with food and downing fruit punch until congested clumps of chewed-up sandwich heaped up a soggy barricade that obstructed any view of their teeth. As a courtesy to my growing queasiness, many of them left their cheeks and chins adorned with decorous dribbles of food. So competitive were these barbarous contestants that half the time they appeared to be eating their own fingers.

Frankly, it was revolting. I was surprised CNN considered this important enough to be posted on their site. Not only did it lack a written story, but it also looked like one of those random clips that belong on YouTube's vast junkyard of video archives. It was the kind of video I would have sent to my friends as a nasty prank, the kind that makes you a bit ashamed of the things humans do.

But the more I thought about it, the more I became semi-grateful this clip was linked to the site. Don't get me wrong. It isn't so much that I endorse this clip, but that I empathize with those who need this sort of bizarre humor to keep them going. In an arbitrary glance at the top half of CNN.com's homepage, I saw the words "abandoned," "suicide," "convicted," and "skimpy market." Obama's name came up on almost every other link, which meant nothing more than politics. This was not a particularly heart-lifting cloud of words, to say the least.

So a video clip featuring fervent sandwich-stuffing competitors is, in its own freakish way, a much-appreciated break from monotony. Ultimately, the same kinds of headlines on jobs and the recession and child abuse do get tiresome from time to time. Especially with the economy's bleak and uncertain future, reading the news can often be tantamount to piling on new burdens. But when something absurd or hilarious is brought to our attention, no matter how aesthetically eccentric it might be, we tend to perk up a little and momentarily forget about weighty grievances such as the one-month countdown to AP testing.

Life is getting boring, you say? Do something crazy, something quirky. Follow CNN's example and break the trend of seriousness. Go on impulsive midnight runs, TP your friend's house, make your dog a Mohawk. If that's too much for you, you can always resort to searching up "farting babies" on YouTube. "Monkey pees in mouth" works, too.