

Legendary Rivalries: Famous Feuds and Bitter Beefs

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Entertainment

Midnight Facts for Insomniacs

Podcast Transcript

(Note: transcript consists of
episode outline)

On the most recent after midnight episode featuring our wives, we joked about creating a *new* podcast called salt and shade, to air all of our bitterness, and today's episode would fit right in with that theme. This is "legendary rivalries and bitter beefs," so "salt and shade" indeed.

Before we get started just a quick reminder that you can now rate podcasts on Spotify, so if you're listening on Spotify as many insomniacs do it's really easy to quickly scroll up and tap five stars. you can't leave a review yet, but it does help us if you leave a rating. And also don't forget about our brand new Patreon. You can choose to be a midnight minion, midnight menace, or a midnight maniac, lots of options and lots of great perks

and most importantly you'd be helping keep this show afloat. Now on to the episode.

Do you have any favorite epic rivalries?

Let's begin with the most infamous and consequential rivalry of the modern era. I am referring of course to the epic battle for the hearts and stomachs of America, the war for sugary, caffeinated domination of vending machines and grocery stores,

Coke vs Pepsi

We gave a brief overview of this rivalry in Episode 45, spectacular failures, in which we talked about the absolute debacle that was New Coke. A perfect example of the old adage, "if it ain't broke don't fix it." Of course, the reason they tried to fix it was because it sort of *was* broken. Pepsi was consistently spanking Coke in taste tests, even the ones conducted internally by the Coca-Cola company, and that was because, as we explained in the previous episode, Pepsi tastes better. As we've established, you and I are team Pepsi. But I thought we'd dive a little deeper into the vicious cola wars, and discuss all of the casualties and collateral damage. To be fair (to be fair) Coke was indeed the original cola. But it didn't start as just a frivolous

sugary thirst quencher. It was medicine. Or at least, it was a recreational drug cocktail masquerading as medicine. Coca-Cola was developed in 1886 in Atlanta Georgia by a civil War veteran and pharmacist named John S Pemberton. Pemberton had become an opium addict after he was stabbed in the chest by a sabre while fighting for the south. I guess he wasn't stabbed BY a saber. He was stabbed by a human holding a saber. Savers don't kill people, people with sabers kill people. *Killed* people. It's been a while since anyone went on a saber rampage. Not as long as I'd thought, though. It's pretty amazing to me that just over 100 years ago, wars still involved hand to hand combat and stabbings. That's how shitty guns were in that era. You often just gave up and grabbed a sword, or used your rifle as a bludgeon or a spear. Pemberton's chest injury was a source of chronic pain, which as mentioned led to him abusing morphine. Or more accurately, abusing his body with morphine. And now we're back to the saber thing. There's no such thing as drug abuse, drugs are not being mistreated. Anyway, apparently morphine wasn't strong enough, because Pemberton would eventually experiment with alternate painkillers and chemical substances for pain management, which would

eventually lead to the potent drug cocktail known as coca-cola that for years would get Americans high AF and now just makes us fat.

Coca-Cola wasn't initially called Coca-Cola. The first recipe was dubbed "Dr. Tuggles compound syrup of Globeflower." That's the filthiest sentence I've ever spoken. I don't want to drink any syrup you tug out of your globeflowers. But yeah, as we've learned, it often takes a couple of tries to get the marketing right. Also the formulation. Because that first version was toxic. But luckily Pemberton lived in the era of coca wine, which we have also discussed in length. So Pemberton went back to the drawing board, started with a base of potent cocaine-infused wine, added extract of the kola-nut (that's Cola with a K) which refers to the highly caffeinated seeds of plants from the African rainforests related to cocoa trees, and created a new formulation called "Pemberton's French wine coca." So we're getting closer to marketable. That's better than "syrup tuggles" or whatever. So now you had a balanced bouquet of cocaine, alcohol, and caffeine. Perfectly legal, btw. It was a wonderful time to be an American and a drug addict. Pemberton marketed his cocaine-caffeine-wine as "a nerve tonic, mental aid, headache remedy — and a cure for morphine

addiction." I mean, yeah. It probably worked. "I am no longer a morphine addict...now I'm an alcoholic tweaker." It's an addiction swap. But you're getting shit done, you're very productive. Like those 12-year-olds we talked about cleaning their rooms on coca-wine. Probably better than morphine, right? I don't know. Junkies are mellow, at least. Some of the ad copy used to market the concoction: "pure joy, exhilarating", and "invigorating." Can't quibble. It would be exhilarating and invigorating... Briefly. Yes. And then you shrivel and die inside until you can get more. As long as you don't stop drinking it, the stuff is invigorating.

Unfortunately for Pemberton, The anti-alcohol temperance movement in Fulton County Georgia had to rain on his narcotic parade, those Tee-toe-tellers as you would call them were literal buzzkills. This was the era that would lead to the 18th amendment outlawing alcohol, which we covered in episode number 70: Dry America, and would also lead to the 21st amendment, promptly reinstating alcohol because sobriety is hard. And not fun, trust me I'd know. Don't do it, unless you need to. America really can't make up his mind about what to legalize and who to punish when it comes to drugs. Alcohol is legal,

wait, now it's not, Vicodin and morphine are available for five cents at any drugstore, now they're only available by prescription, crack is whack, but mayors are doing it, and these days the government won't even let you ingest salts from a bath.

So Pemberton worked diligently on the now alcohol-free formula, sending out samples to local pharmacies to get feedback, doing some product testing and market research. And also probably as a strategy to utilize gateway-drug addiction...first taste is free. That's how they get you. As a result of his tweaking the formula, and tweaking in general, he added citric acid to the mixture to tame some of the syrupy sweetness. The final alcohol-free version, still featuring caffeine and cocaine, or at least the less refined version of coca leaves but still a stimulant, debuted in 1886 at the Jacob Pharmacy in Atlanta. It cost five cents a pop, literally, and was sold as a syrup that would be mixed with sparkling water right in front of the customer. So you got your cocaine soda right from the tap, farm-to-table drug syrup. It would be 8 years before Pemberton would begin bottling and selling the stuff in a form similar to what we know today. Notably it was Frank Robinson, Pemberton's bookkeeper, who

coined the name coca-cola and designed the iconic logo. The story doesn't have a happy ending for the inventor of the drink, however; Pemberton would soon be diagnosed with stomach cancer. Desperate to feed his morphine addiction, and encouraged by his son who was also a morphine addict, Pemberton would sell the formula and the bulk of his shares in the company to investor Asa Griggs Candler for either \$1,750, \$238.98, or \$2,300 depending on the source, or more likely none of those but an amount that was definitely less than the approximately 240 billion dollars the company is currently worth...but presumably enough for a few sacks of morphine. I guess if I had to choose between those different sources I'm going with the \$238.98 because that's super specific. It takes real confidence to include the .98 cents, that source was not even rounding up two cents. I believe that the \$238 was for the formula, and the other dollar amounts were for the shares... there's a lot of controversy over how it all went down, but we know that Pemberton died on August 16, 1888, without seeing his creation become a national sensation... probably for the best, since he didn't own it anymore. Seeing that happen would have been painful. Not as painful as stomach cancer, but still pretty bad. And what was

he going to do with all that money anyway? You can only do so much smack. I do hope it alleviated the pain in his final years. Fuck cancer. After Pemberton's death, for a time his son Charley still owned the name coca-cola, so Asa was forced to sell the product under names like "yum-yum" and coke with two Ks. Those failed to catch on, but the morphine-addicted Charley Pemberton died 6 years later, Candler was able to consolidate his ownership of coca cola and pursue world domination.

In 1903, the approximately 9 milligrams of cocaine per bottle were removed from the formulation, but the company still does use coca leaves, with the active coca removed.

The current formula for coca-cola was housed for many years in the vault of Atlanta's Sun Trust bank, but has now been moved downtown to the World of Coca-Cola museum, a popular tourist attraction for unpopular people. I don't know, I just wouldn't want to hang out with someone who paid to visit the world of coca-cola, but that's just me. A world of coca-cola is not the world for me. I don't want to live in any soda-based world, a world with a cola foundation. So sticky. "The company protects the secrecy of its syrup recipe by shipping ingredients to its syrup factories in the form of anonymous

"merchandises", numbered 1 through 9. Factory managers are told the relative proportions of each numbered merchandise, and the mixing procedure, but not the ingredients in the merchandises, some of which are themselves mixtures of more basic ingredients." So as a bottler you don't the list of ingredients, and you don't even get the full syrup, you get a soft-drink-assembly-kit. It's like arts and crafts.

A couple factoids about the company in its current incarnation:

- The Coca-Cola Company is the largest non-alcoholic beverage company, reaching more than 200 countries.
- Coca-Cola neither completes nor bottles the majority of its products.
- The company generates revenue by selling concentrates and syrups to bottling facilities globally and by selling finished products to retailers and other distributors.

Now let's talk about the Hatfield to this Coca-cola McCoy: the Pepsi corporation.

If you thought the "syrup tug flower" or whatever was a bad name, Pepsi literally started as a beverage called "Brad's drink." It was created in New Bern North Carolina by drugstore owner Caleb

Bradham back in 1893, five years after the death of John Pemberton but still over a decade away from coca-cola becoming a true phenomenon. The recipe consisted of kola nut extract, "rare oils" and vanilla. So it was actually much closer to the beverage we know today than coca-cola was, there was no alcohol or cocaine, just caffeine and flavoring. The name Pepsi is a combination of Cola from the kola nut, or more accurately seed, and the word pepsin, after the human digestive enzyme of that name. Because Bradham believed that the beverage would aid in digestion. Interesting choice. Bile aids in digestion. I don't think I would name a soda after it. "Brad's bile." Don't name drinks after digestive fluids. "Delicious pancreatic juice." In addition to slinging gastric soda-syrup, Bradham became a successful bank owner and a lieutenant in the North Carolina Naval militia and eventually authorized franchises in 24 states, post World War I the price of sugar spiked from 3 cents to 28 cents per pound. Bradham bought sugar in bulk, assuming the price would continue rising, but instead the price cratered, leaving the Pepsi company with a large volume of extremely overpriced sugar. Pepsi declared bankruptcy in 1923; Bradham sold the trademark and ended up working back in his drug

store. He wouldn't live to see the ultimate success of his creation. The Pepsi assets bounced around among investors as Coca Cola ballooned into the dominant force in the soda space. But Coke's success and resulting arrogance would give Pepsi a foothold. Charles Guth, owner of a chain of Candy stores with soda fountains, eventually bought the rights to Pepsi because coke was demanding high prices for syrup, and he spearheaded a reformulation of the Pepsi recipe. It was at this point that Coke actually had the opportunity to buy Pepsi; not once but three times between 1922 and 1933 coke passed on the offer. Pepsi's big break came during the Great Depression when price-conscious consumers respond positively to Pepsi's new 12 ounce bottles. Even though they were almost twice as big as the standard soda bottles of the day, Pepsi kept the same nickel price and consumers flocked to the bargain soda, while Coke stubbornly refused to compete on price. Pepsi rubbed in the pricing discrepancy with jingles like "Pepsi-Cola hits the spot / Twelve full ounces, that's a lot / Twice as much for a nickel, too / Pepsi-Cola is the drink for you."

Also in the 40s, Pepsi hired the socially progressive Walter Mack as corporation president, and he savvily noted that other soda

companies were neglecting entire segments of the soda-buying population. In the 40s Pepsi got serious about reaching out to an African-American audience, hiring an all-black marketing team and highlighting prominent African Americans and their achievements in ads. Another all-black team was recruited to travel the country promoting Pepsi, where they faced threats and intimidation by locals and even the KKK. But the campaign worked. In Chicago, for instance, a visit from the sales team preceded a watershed moment: Pepsi eclipsed Coke for the first time as the most popular soft drink in Chicago. Let's not give Mack or Pepsi too much credit for courage, though. In order to assuage concerns that white consumers were being ignored by the Pepsi marketing operation, Mack reassured 500 bottlers that they didn't need to worry because, "we don't want it to become known as a [n-word] drink." So, "Progressive" meant something a little bit different back then. Basically, if you weren't actively assaulting minorities, you were progressive. However, it does seem that Mack was the driving force behind Pepsi's outreach to minorities; when he left the company in 1950, the African-American sales team was disbanded.

Another big boost for Pepsi came in the 50s, when actress Joan Crawford married the president of the Pepsi Corporation, Alfred N Steele, and he convinced her to become an official spokesperson. Throughout this time, Coca-Cola was thriving. Their jingles and marketing strategies might not have been as innovative as Pepsi's, but they tended to be effective. Of course, my favorite ad campaign was from 1886, when they debuted their greatest slogan: "Drink Coca-Cola." reminds me of, "good morning, have you used Pears soap? (From our advertising episode, number 75, marketing boomsplodes: ads that crashed and burned).

Coca-Cola also helped popularize and mainstream the current incarnation of Santa Claus with which we're all familiar. We've talked about this as well... coca-Cola did not, as many people believe, invent the modern concept of Santa Claus, but in the 1920s they took the character that was created by cartoonist Thomas Nast, and they popularized the figure. By the 1930s, Coca-Cola had hired artist Haddon Sundblom to further soften the image of the Thomas Nast version, Sundblom created iconic paintings inspired by the text of the "Twas the night before Christmas" poem depicting Santa with the classic stout figure,

laughter lines, beard, and rosy cheeks, forever linking Santa Claus to the Coca-Cola corporation, and in the process selling a whole crapload of Coke.

The rivalry really heated up in the latter half of the 20th century, with the famed "cola wars." In the 1970s Pepsi debuted its "Pepsi challenge," which we discussed previously. It was super effective. It turns out that one very effective marketing strategy is to point out that your product is better and people prefer it. Team Pepsi.

In response, Coca-Cola created and released "new Coke," and you can hear that story in the previously referenced episode of our podcast. And by the title, you can probably tell it wasn't a big hit. The next phase in the battle was recruiting celebrity soldiers for the cola wars, as both companies went after big-name stars. Pepsi recruited Michael Jackson in the 80s, while coke countered with Paula Abdul. Kind of a lopsided battle there. Although, in 1984 Michael Jackson's hair famously did spontaneously combust while filming a Pepsi commercial, and also he molested a bunch of kids. So I guess we can give at least a moral victory to Paula Abdul.

We won't rehash the New Coke debacle, but what could have been absolutely disastrous for Coke

actually ended up being an accidental victory in the long run, because the re-introduction of "Coca-Cola classic" created a huge nostalgic demand for the product, and Coke has been on top ever since.

Today, Coca-Cola still holds a sizable advantage over Pepsi in market share, with around 45% of the entire soda market compared to Pepsi's 20-something. In fact, back in 2010 it was revealed that for the first time ever not only did Coke outsell Pepsi, but Diet Coke by *itself* also outsold Pepsi, which meant the Coke held both the number one and number two most popular soda spots. If you ever doubt the effectiveness of marketing, just think of the fact that in blind taste test Pepsi trounces Coke, yet Coke has always been the established market leader based on branding and publicity. Coke in fact outsells Pepsi almost everywhere in the world, with a few weird and notable exceptions: in Buffalo New York, Pepsi spans Coke, outselling them 2 to 1, maybe Pepsi is better for washing down those delicious buffalo chicken wings.

However, Pepsi gets the last laugh by winning the battle of global revenue for the two companies. Both companies have diversified and now own a ton of other brands. For instance, Coke owns sprite, Dasani, vitamin water, Odwalla, and

such popular beverage juggernauts as Fanta and tab. But PepsiCo in particular owns some of the most popular snacks on the market: Doritos, Lays, 7-Up, Cheetos, captain crunch, rice-a-roni, crackerjack, Gatorade, Quaker, Mountain Dew...the list goes on. So you could say that Coke won this particular battle, but Pepsi won the war

Hatfields Vs McCoys

The most famous of all American feuds was instigated, as most great rivalries are, by a dispute over a pig. If you remember the pig war of 1859 which we covered in episode 18, pointless petty wars. 17 years after the pig war, now 1878, no one had learned any lessons, because a man named Randall McCoy would kick off a brutal decades-long conflict by accusing the paternal leader of a rival clan of hog theft. A little backstory: the Hatfield's, led by timber magnate William Anderson Hatfield aka "Devil" Anse, lived in Mingo County on the West Virginia side of the Tug Fork river, a tributary of the Big Sandy river, while the McCoys, led by Randolph "Ol' Ran'l" McCoy, lived on the Kentucky side of the tug fork, and just by saying these words I feel a mullet sprouting on my head and attraction to my own cousins blossoming deep in my nether

regions. This is the most hillbilly of hillbilly fairytales. Both families were involved in the moonshine trade, but the Hatfields were wealthier as a result of "Devil" Anse's timber business and at various times he would even employ McCoys. Only the most Traitorous of McCoys, obviously, no self-respecting McCoy would work for a Hatfield. At least not after the pig debacle.

So about that. Pigs were often marked with specific ear notches to indicate ownership, and our story begins on a sunny day in 1878 (I don't know if it was sunny, I'm embellishing for story, kinda winging it to paint a picture) so on that particular warm, sunny day—there was a light breeze from the East—Randall McCoy was visiting Floyd Hatfield, devil Anse's cousin, and he spotted among the pigs, a pig sporting the particular McCoy ear notches. I'm not sure what those were, maybe it was a cool lightning bolt or something.

Probably an M. what if a pig had been in a pig fight and it's ears were haphazardly shredded and notched? Anyway, Floyd denied having poached the pig, and Ol' Ran'l sued. So it started fairly reasonably, they were facing off in small claims court before facing off on any type of battlefield, this was less Civil War and more judge Judy. But lawyering up doesn't make for a

great rivalry story." "These two families sued the crap out of each other for like 100 years, so much paperwork. The sheer viciousness of the motions and counter motions was impossible to describe."

The jury for the trial was split among Hatfields and McCoy's (apparently there weren't 12 other families in the tug fork region to choose from, this was the south) and the primary witness was a guy named Bill Staton, he was a McCoy who was married to a Hatfield, and I think we're figuring out the problems here. First, we need some other people in this town, and second, poor Bill Staton was in a no-win situation. I've only been married a few months but I already feel for this guy and I understand the decision he made. The presiding Justice of the peace for the trial was Anderson "Preacher Anse Hatfield" cousin of Devil Anse. So this was an impartial and perfectly reasonable judicial scenario. Rumor was that Devil Anse actually received his nickname to distinguish him from Preacher, who was much more righteous and God-fearing. But still loyal to the family. Preacher ruled in favor of the Hatfields, shockingly, though he could argue that he based his ruling on the evidence, because the previously referenced witness, Bill Staton had chosen the path of least resistance, he decided not to

antagonize his Hatfield wife, and testified that the pig had not been stolen. I don't know how he was a witness to a non-theft. Yes your honor, I saw it not happen, I watched that man not steal that pig." When exactly did you watch him not steal a pig? "All the times. Even today, right now I'm watching him not steal any pigs."

Even though Staton was a McCoy by blood, after testifying against his kin he would be disowned by the family and later murdered by brothers Sam and Paris McCoy. I guess we've moved out of the reasonable, judicial phase, so much for small claims court. Now it's down-home justice. This pig was like John Wick's dog. Don't mess with a man's pig

The next phase of the feud was more cinematic, or maybe more literary. Shakespearean, even. In 1880, at an Election Day gathering, a pair of Star-crossed lovers didn't meet, in fair Tug Fork where we lay our scene. It was at that romantic, moonlit political rally that 18-year-old Johnson "Johnse" Hatfield, son of Devil Anse himself, first set eyes on the daughter of Ol' Rane'l McCoy, Rosanne. I'm embellishing again with the moonlight, it could've been cloudy, I don't know. Do you think "Romeo and Juliet" would have been as popular if it was "Johnse and Rosanna"?

But it truly WAS a full-on hillbilly Romeo and Juliet. The Hatfields and McCoys were like the Montagues and Capulets, or maybe the Sharks and Jets would be a better analogy. Like two rival gangs.

The young lovers would get frisky at the political rally—who isn't aroused by straw polls and hanging chads (boning at the election office, a tale as old as time)—and afterward Rosanna, fearing retribution from her clan, would take refuge with the Hatfields. Rosanna also took preppers, as they say in southern caricatures, at which point her loving Romeo, Johnse Hatfield, up and left her for her cousin Nancy. The story of Johnse and Rosanna is still often portrayed as a romantic tale of forbidden love when in fact, according to the blog "Appalachian lady," written by an anonymous woman who claims to be a Hatfield descendant and seems credible enough, it wasn't exactly a love story for the ages.

"Johnse...was still seeing other girls the entire time he was seeing Roseanna. The truth of the matter is that Johnse did not love Roseanna, and certainly had no intention of marrying her. That had all just been a lie to get her to have sex with him." Now that's a tale as old as time. More from the Appalachian lady, "Like naive young ladies everywhere, Roseanna equated sex with love and, thinking

that her love would change his cheating ways, she fell deeply in love with Johnse despite being treated so badly by him. When her relationship with Johnse ended and just months later he married her cousin (one of the girls he had been continuously seeing behind her back all along), she pined for him endlessly, not being able to accept that he had never loved her at all. It is said that Roseanna never got over losing Johnse and their baby, and that she died of a broken heart shortly before her 30th birthday. Given that there were no real medical records kept back then, we are not privy to the exact cause of Roseanna McCoy's death. The oldtimers who told me the real story said that she committed suicide, since that is what "died of a broken heart" meant back then."

Appalachian Lady also dishes on the media portrayals of the rivalry. Of devil Anse, portrayed by Kevin Costner, "He also looked absolutely nothing like Kevin Costner in the miniseries, as you can see in the photo at left.

The actors portraying the family are far more attractive than the actual Hatfield family (naturally, since they are actors), which is something my family finds endlessly amusing." That family has a good sense of humor. "This show is a farce. We are away uglier than that." "Not only

did Anse look absolutely nothing like Kevin Costner, but Vacey was actually short and plump, and Johnse did not look like the dreamboat he is portrayed as being.

Roseanna McCoy was not even a blonde."

In an 1882 altercation that would become known as the pawpaw tree incident, the McCoy's enacted some revenge on a totally uninvolved and innocent party, Anse's brother and Johnse's uncle Ellison Hatfield. It happened on yet another Election Day. I was going to say elections were way more aggressive back in the day but...oops. The McCoy boys, Tolbert, Phamer (Pharmer), and Bud, stabbed Ellison 26 times and then shot him, you know, just as an exclamation point. He still didn't die, at least not right away, That was a tough bastard. They stabbed him 26 times, and he was like, what else you got? And then they shot him and he was like, ok, that's enough.

The boys were apprehended by law enforcement, but a posse formed by Devil Anse intercepted the prisoners on their way to the pikefield jail. Anse decreed that if his brother survived, the boys would be allowed to live. Spoiler alert. There are no happy endings. When Ellison succumbed to his diverse plethora of wounds, the McCoy boys were dragged across to the West Virginia side of the tug

fork, tied to paw paw bushes, and filled full of lead.

Over the succeeding years, the feud would expand and drag in additional participants, like a black hole sucking in the entire county, it would become a territorial dispute, larger than two families, and would even inspire the governors of the two states to threaten to send their militias to quell the rivalry.

Residents and politicians and law-enforcement from Kentucky and West Virginia rallied around whichever family resided in their state.

The most dramatic and infamous incident, the one that brought national attention to the feud and captured the imagination of America, was the notorious New Year Massacre in 1888. A group of Hatfields surrounded the McCoy residence, and pumped rounds into the farmhouse as the McCoy's returned fire from inside. To break the standoff, the Hatfields set fire to the house, sending McCoy's scurrying into the freezing woods. Two would be gunned down while others would suffer frostbite from spending the night cowering in the cold. Ol' Ranel' did survive, but his wife Sarah was caught and savagely beaten.

In response to the massacre, warrants were issued and a posse was formed to track down the

hatfields. The posse would succeed in killing one of the primary aggressors, Vance, and after a firefight with Anse and his crew, the posse would apprehend the rest of the gang, and many of devil Anse's sons would be put on trial.

Controversy over whether the men could be extradited to Kentucky escalated all the way to the Supreme Court, where it would eventually be decided in favor of the McCoys. Eight Hatfields were found guilty, seven sentenced to life in prison and the eighth, the mentally challenged illegitimate son of first cousins Ellison and Harriet Hatfield, the man known as Ellison "Cottontop" Mounts, was executed by hanging. Public execution was illegal in Kentucky, so the state erected a small fence around the gallows, which was then set at the bottom of a hill so that the scene could be easily viewed by the thousands of onlookers seated on the surrounding hillside.

Pat's Vs Genos

I've always been sort of intrigued by the idea of regional foods and local delicacies. They're always either really gross or weird or else it's something you can get anywhere

and some city just claims that theirs is the best. Like, "we have the best saltine crackers in all of the Pacific Northwest," and it's like, ok.

Because the thing is that if a food becomes popular enough it's going to spread everywhere. Unless it's something no one else wants to eat, like haggis. Scottish people are like, "You can only get Haggis in Scotland and every other country is like, yeah. Good. We've quarantined that shit. Do not try to board a plane with haggis...remove your shoes and laptops and surrender any food with guts in it." Do you have a favorite regional dish?

Some famous regional dishes include Chicago-style pizza, which is pizza-flavored casserole, and New York pizza, which is pizza flavored cardboard, and buffalo wings, which are buffalo-flavored chicken wings...midnight fact: buffaloes are naturally spicy. no, Buffalo Wings are chicken wings from buffalo New York, which are fried and basted, and finally Philadelphia cheesesteaks, which are fucking disgusting. If you've ever had a hot dog and thought to yourself, I really enjoy this form factor but I wish it were way less healthy, a cheesesteak is for you. Heres how you make a cheesesteak: first you give up on life, then you lower your standards and redefine the concept of edible

food, and then squirt cheese whiz on chopped meats.

The Philadelphia cheesesteak was invented—or I guess assembled—in Philadelphia on the corner of 9th street and Passyunk avenue in 1933 by brothers and hot dog vendors Pat and Harry Olivieri. The meat is usually ribeye beef slathered with gooey cheese and your choice of toppings such as sautéed onions, peppers, mushrooms, and maybe some ketchup, if you're looking for the full evacuation therapy. A Mad Doctor Munro approved treatment for insanity. Incidentally Cheese whiz is now standard on Philly cheesteaks but as cheese whiz wasn't invented until 1953, the original cheese was most likely provolone, which is less disgusting. It's really that yellow, slimy fake cheese that makes me retch. "It wasn't until the 1940's that melted cheese was added to the steak sandwich by a drunk manager, Joe Lorenzo at one of Pat's locations on Ridge Avenue,"

The sandwich became so popular among self-loathing Philadelphians that Pat would open his own restaurant called Pat's King of Steaks on the site of his former hot dog stand.

Pat's restaurant was killing the cheesesteak game for 36 years, until a brash young cook named Joseph Vento opened a competing

restaurant named Geno's directly across the street. That's ballsy. It's particularly ballsy that he named the restaurant after no one just for the hell of it. His name wasn't Geno. He saw the name on the back of the building's door and went with it. There was a Geno here at some point so why not.. He eventually had a son and named HIM geno presumably to retcon the decision and make it seem more legit. Speaking of questionable decisions, Joseph would later explain his rationale for opening a cheesesteak restaurant directly across from a famous cheesesteak restaurant by saying "If you want to sell cheesesteaks, you go where they eat cheesesteaks." That's one strategy. You could also say, if you want to sell a lot of cheesesteaks, go to places where they don't already have a lot of cheesesteaks. Supply and demand. Market saturation is a thing. But it turned out to be kind of brilliant, because the rivalry quickly became infamous. The shops are positioned aggressively facing each other on a street corner like duelists in a Wild West ghost town. Geno's shop is bigger, glitzier, with bright neon lights, and famously does not chop up their meat. It is sliced. Also, Geno's cuts their sandwiches in half as opposed to Pat's, which leaves the sandwich intact. So one chop the bread and the other store chops

the meat. Choose your chop. Geno's has always been more aggressive and glitzier: Joseph would put up signs up -- 'The Best,' 'Ace beats King,' 'No need to order double meat, walk across the street,' and other brilliant rhyming diss tracks.

Customers perpetuated the rivalry. If you're a Philly resident, you probably have a strong opinion; either you prefer Pat's, or Geno's, or you strongly believe the entire rivalry is stupid tourist nonsense and you couldn't care less because you don't eat disgusting cheese-whiz sandwiches. But for those who cared, it was like picking sides in a football game, the fans of each team standing on opposite sides and glaring at their hated rivals. Sometimes. Mostly the customers just ignored each other and ate sandwiches because most people aren't insane.

By all accounts the rivalry was initially very real but the two shops quickly realized that all of the publicity was good for business and played up the animosity. In 1999 the two owners faced off on the Dr Phil show and at the prompting of the non-real-doctor they sampled each other's sandwiches and both immediately spit out the single bite. Not-Dr Phil quipped "the Mideast crisis is nothing compared to this." And was immediately beheaded. I

wish.

In December 2005 Joseph Vento of Geno's posted a sign that read "*This is AMERICA: WHEN ORDERING PLEASE SPEAK ENGLISH.*" It stayed up after his death in 2011, because his gay son initially chose to respect his father's dying wish which was to keep the sign. Imagine having an openly gay son and being like, look, I can accept your lifestyle choices as long as you promise to never stop discriminating against foreigners. The sign however was quietly removed by Joseph's son in 2016 around the time of the democratic convention in Philadelphia. His son was like "I'm going to remove this sign because it's the right thing to do...five years later now that it is financially beneficial to do so." Hero.

In 2016 journalist Helen Ubiñas documented her experience of ordering a cheesesteak at Geno's in Spanish, she approached the window and said "Dos con Whiz por favor." Because "wit whiz" or "No whiz" is the standard way to order. The result was anticlimactic. They gave her sandwiches. Two, with whiz, as requested. She was rewarded for her bravery with disgusting hunks of chopped meat.

I respect her hutzpa but not her snack selection. Wit Whiz? no gracias. But hey, if you are a non-English-speaker in Philadelphia who also hates your own stomach, you can now make terrible decisions and order sandwiches next to the loyal patrons of a historically bigoted restaurant. Even more controversially, In 2019 Geno's debuted a mascot named whizzy. "Although they considered various renditions of the name, including "Whiz head," Vento said the name "Whizzy" stuck.

"'Whizzy' was catchy. It's fresh, it's hip," Vento said." You know what isn't fresh or hip? the words fresh and hip. It took eight months to "develop" the mascot. "'When he first started out, he didn't quite look like a cheesesteak," Vento said. "He started out like a Twinkie, then turned into a peanut, then kind of morphed into a cheesesteak."

Frank Olivieri of rival Pat's King of Steaks on the other hand, promptly announced that they would not be developing their own cheesy mascot. "Instead, the shop is pursuing a slightly more mobile (but equally uncomfortable) option in the form of [Pat's-branded Smart cars wrapped with the store's logo](#). The plan, Olivieri said, is to drive the Smart cars around Philly and hand out free steaks and shop-swag. "To torture somebody and put them in a Whizzy costume, I don't know,

I'd rather put them in a Smart car," Olivieri said. "Maybe Gritty and Whizzy can hang out — they're both kind of scary.""

Shade thrown.

I read a bunch of reviews and the consensus seems to be that Geno's makes a better sandwich but that's like choosing between a kick and a punch. They're both painful, but you might as well choose the one that isn't delivered by a racist. I've never been to either cheesesteak shop, but I prefer pat's. Because I'm not awful.

PATRON SHOUTOUT

As promised we want to call out some of our patrons: Tomo, J.V., Sam, June, Emily, Josh,

READ A REVIEW



MFFI is a fantastic show packed with interesting information about a variety of topics. They have covered everything from weird ocean creatures, to Disney, to ghosts, so you never know what will be up next! The hosts have great chemistry and bounce off each other flawlessly. There isn't a lot of annoying, off topic "fluff", and everything is well researched and accurate, so you know the facts you're hearing are actually facts.

Lydia
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July 18, 2021
via Podchaser



And I also promised to read reviews from other countries, so here's one

from the UK:



Top stuff

This has me laughing and learning, 2 of my favourite things.

uberdunk2 from the United Kingdom

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October 5, 2021
via Apple Podcasts

<https://www.history.com/shows/hatfields-and-mccoys/articles/the-hatfield-mccoy-feud>

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