

The Mustard Sandwich

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If you think you know who your best friend, significant other, mother, father, uncle, boss, barber, doctor, barista, accountant, side bitch, pimp, or priest really is, you don't until you ask them if they'd eat a mustard sandwich.

My obsession with the mustard sandwich began one fateful day over four months ago, in the middle of a story my friend Bryce was regaling about his old job at a Cinemark. Bryce is a film major, so it didn't surprise me that he held fond memories of his time working at the movie theater. However, it caught my attention when Bryce mentioned casually in passing how he used to indulge in a mustard sandwich at the end of his shift with the day's leftover ingredients.

I now realize I don't remember the context of the story he was telling, but that I couldn't believe the mustard sandwich wasn't the focal point of his tale.

The classic mustard sandwich is constructed as thus: open a hot dog bun, nix the dog, and slather on a mustard of your choosing. (The original Cinemark mustard sandwich was erected on a hamburger bun, but Bryce assured me there's no wrong way to do a mustard sandwich except to not.) Yellow mustard works well for an informal snack, but spread some dijon if you're feeling frisky, 'scuse me, fancy.

Right off the bat, let me make it clear I'm not fulfilling an endorsement deal for the mustard

sandwich commission. If mustard sandwichism was a religion, I'd be yet to be baptized. True to this day I place pencil upon paper, I've never tried one. However, like all new, somewhat frightening things, I'd be open to trying one, if, as my friend Isa put it, "there was a gun to my head, or I was triple dawg dared."

It quickly became an addiction of mine to ask people whether they'd eat a mustard sandwich. It's like I had an itch I couldn't quite reach, or an appetite I just couldn't satisfy to see people's reactions.

It's always fascinating to watch how passionately cantankerous a person can get over something that really doesn't matter at all. It's safe to say that if you want to see what kind of spouse someone would make, see how they respond when you disagree with them over whether to eat a mustard sandwich.

It's the most innocent way to peek into the depths of the human psyche.

So like a good host, I popped the question at the table of my 21st birthday dinner, and leaned back out of fist's reach.

"Yeah, I'd eat it. Doesn't sound that bad, and why not," said Sneha, who's known to go with the flow. Across the table, Bryce nodded in almost paternal like approval while Ryan's eyes practically burst out of his head in revulsion.

"Accepting defeat and eating it is like

spitting in the face of all the better food society offers,” he snarled. “Eating a mustard sandwich is declaring war against civilization.” He crossed his arms over his chest as Tanja dove into the range of fire.

“I don’t know, I mean it could be alright with some dijon,” she mused.

“Yeah, like if I was hungry and didn’t have anything else to eat, I don’t think I’d mind,” Spencer agreed as Ryan drooped with devastation.

“The army is growing!” Bryce rejoiced.

“That shit is stupid,” piped up Brad, sitting physically and metaphorically next to Ryan. I’ve tried to psychoanalyze why this conversation piece erupts so intensely. What makes the mustard sandwich appealing to some, and so abhorrent to others? Does it all come down to disliking people who’re different from us? Or is it simply a condiment issue? Could finding common ground on the mustard sandwich lead to us to compromise on larger matters? Here I’ll start, if you eat a mustard sandwich, then I’ll teach my conservative grandfather to be less racist. “Peace and love and mustard,” I think I once heard Ringo Starr say.

When I returned home for Thanksgiving break I got lunch with my friend Eddie and his roommate Ian. Racing through a marathon of Eddie’s mysterious habits, Ian seemed quite distraught when he described Eddie’s extreme nocturnal consumption of milk.

“He’ll go through a carton like every two nights!” he cried, wringing his hands with the helplessness of a friend who’s just about run out of patience and empathy. “I’ll hear him rummaging around, clinking glasses, and sloshing dairy at 1 AM!”

“Oh, that’s me making my Pilk,” Eddie informed me, his head high on his shoulders.

“Pilk?” I said inquisitively, leaning in as if to hear something extremely shameful.

“Yeah, Pepsi and milk mixed,” he explained.

“The key is to put in about 60 percent milk, and add Pepsi to taste.”

“Would you eat a mustard sandwich?” I blurted out urgently, feeling I was on the cusp of a monumental discovery in human psycho-analytics.

“Oh sure, for a snack,” Eddie responded without missing a beat as Ian closed his eyes and brought his hands together in front of his forehead, as if in futile prayer. I, for one, nodded in satisfaction.

Most people who agree to eat a mustard sandwich usually give a laconic shrug and respond with some form of “why not?”

“Isn’t it just like a pretzel with mustard?” my cousin Emily texted back. “it’s kinda the same concept so people shouldn’t be grossed out.” She then admitted she was hangry to the point of eating almost anything.

For fun, and research, but mainly amusement, I posted a poll on my instagram account which showed 77% of responders wouldn’t eat a mustard sandwich, while 23% chose the option “I’m eating one right now.” In addition, one of my friends from my old college messaged me to tell me my poll was concerning, but she hoped I was enjoying living in Colorado.

“Why do you enjoy a mustard sandwich?” I asked Bryce, 4 months after my obsession began.

“I [expletive] made it one day, and that [expletive]’s good.” he philosophised.

After a week of extensive research and spending hours scribbling away in my notebook, while downing countless cups of coffee over a few lines of cocaine and no mustard sandwiches, I thought perhaps I could finally put this project to rest.

I was just settling in for a desperately needed night of sleep when a thought suddenly knocked me right back into consciousness.

Is a hotdog a sandwich?