

[00:00:00]

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Transition: Brassy holiday music.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast! I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. It's the end of the year, and it's time for our annual Judge John Hodgman office holiday party. With me as always—he's the holiday man, Judge John Hodgman.

John Hodgman: *(To the tune of "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas".)* It's beginning to smell a lot like mustard!

(They giggle.)

Jesse Thorn: *(Continuing the song.)* All throughout the house!

John Hodgman: No spoilers, but when you think of holiday smells, you think grape jelly and mustard! And that's wafting into my nostrils here on the JJ-ho-ho-ho office holiday party. Jessie, the last time we did this, you couldn't join us, because you pretended to be sick to get out of eating all this weird food.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I pretended to have a debilitating chronic illness. *(Laughs.)* Migraine headaches. A permanent disability.

John Hodgman: Let's just say it was convenient. Look, a migraine is never convenient for you and anyone who has to struggle with them. And I apologize for that, but you got out eating some weird food the last time we did this. But this time you're back, I hope in good fettle, and no hope of escape for you. This is a tradition that started a little while ago when we invited people to send in their most—treasured?!—or most interesting family recipes for the holidays.

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughing.)* Distinctive. What other euphemisms for weird and disgusting are there?

John Hodgman: We wanted their most treasured family recipes. And what we got instead was tomato soup salad. And you weren't around when we had the tomato. This is a cold, molded salad made of tomato soup, gelatin, cream cheese, bell pepper, and onion. And our listener in New England, Will, passed it on to us like a curse after it had been passed on to him by his grandmother in Milo, Maine. And he claims that everyone loves this salad, and everyone in the family devours it, and he likes to have it the day after Thanksgiving or Christmas or whatever—cold, like a slab of it between two pieces of white bread.

And we tried it. Jesse, you weren't here. It was not to my liking, but Will won't stop sending me pictures of it year after year. So, I just wanted to share with you our listeners 2023's tomato soup salad. Jesse, it's in the document there for you. Obviously, listeners can see it at

MaximumFun.org/jjho page, as well as our Instagram account, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman). What do you think of this year's ring mold?

Jesse Thorn: Oh, wow! (*Laughing.*) Yeah, I just opened it up, and it really—well, I mean, it looks—to some extent, it just looks like a creamsicle Bundt cake. Like, as you would imagine if you made Jell-O in a Jell-O mold that was a Bundt cake style Jell-O mold. It may even be a Bundt pan.

John Hodgman: An opaque Jell-O. Like, a creamy, pale, tomato, opaque Jell-O.

Jesse Thorn: But then it has these shards of vegetable appearing as though they're—it makes it look like an inedible moon rock.

John Hodgman: Jennifer Marmor, producer—you're here on the line, are you not?

Jennifer Marmor: I'm here!

John Hodgman: Happy holidays to you.

Jennifer Marmor: Happy Holidays!

John Hodgman: But you and I both had the tomato soup salad, right?

Jennifer Marmor: No, I didn't. You really threw a curveball during that recording. I was not planning on prepping that, and then you showed up with a container of it. You held it upside down over your computer—Dairy Queen Blizzard style.

(John confirms.)

It was a sight. It was a sight. So, you and Joel tried it. (*Chuckles.*)

John Hodgman: And the release from the Bundt cake pan was not perfect, Will, this year. So, as Jesse points out, there's a craggy bottom to it, revealing the strata of bits of bell pepper and onion—which are challenging to people, even when not encased in tomato soup mixed with mayonnaise and cream cheese. But now that you've seen it, Jesse, you will die in seven days. Listeners, you can take your own life in your hands, 'cause this photo as well as the recipe is on the show page at MaximumFun.org. We're not going to taste it again this year, because we've got too many good new things to taste.

Before we get to them though, Jesse, it says here—this is our cocktail hour, by the way, at the holiday party. It says here in this piece of paper that I'm looking at that you have never tried eggnog with orange soda. Is that correct?

Jesse Thorn: This is a *Judge John Hodgman* legend beverage, one that you and Jennifer bring up a lot because you—

John Hodgman: Iconic.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, you tried it on a past holiday episode, and I never have. I have to say that I like both eggnog—I'm a big eggnog fan; I love eggnog. I know some people, it grosses them out, but I really like it. And I like orange soda.

[00:05:00]

I'm an adult orange soda drinker, and I'm not afraid to admit it. My favorite is a Jarritos Mandarinina, but I'll drink any orange soda that comes along. Sometimes you feel like a soda pop, and I don't drink caffeine ordinarily. So, orange soda is a nice available one. It's a little more than a—like, a 7-Up or a Sprite is not enough flavor for me. Yeah.

John Hodgman: Don't take a drink now, Jesse, because what I'm going to say is this is two great tastes that go great together. Eggnog and orange soda—(*singing*) Reese's eggnog-orange Cup!—and everyone in the world who has tried it likes it. There can be no skepticism about this, Jesse. That's a fact.

Jesse Thorn: Okay, I'm deeply skeptical about it. I want to be clear.

John Hodgman: Oh, no, no, no. Well, there's—we have proof.

Jennifer Marmor: There's a—I screened some litigants for a case that we might hear, and before we hung up, we had like five minutes left on the Zoom call. And they were like, “Wait, we have a question for you! Is eggnog and orange soda actually good?!”

(*Jesse laughs.*)

And I love that they were like, “We're gonna talk to the producer of *Judge John Hodgman*, we gotta know.”

Jesse Thorn: “We're gonna get to the bottom of this. There's only one way to find out. Ask someone else!”

(*Jennifer confirms with a laugh.*)

John Hodgman: Well, Jesse and those listeners and everyone else: if you need any proof that eggnog and orange soda should be had as quickly as possible, fear not. Here are some unsolicited accolades from some friends of the show.

Clip:

Jean Grae: Hi. I'm guest bailiff Jean Grae, and I enjoy eggnog with orange soda. Let me just—(*mumbles*).

Oh, I love—(*strained*) I love it so much, and no one is making me say this. Mm. Mm-hm. Happy holidays!

(*Jesse cackles over the clip.*)

Monte Belmonte: It's your summertime fun-time guest bailiff Monte Belmonte here, and I enjoy eggnog with orange soda! I love it so much, and that's not a Fanta-sy! I'm not just egg-nogging you on! It's delicious, and no one is making me say this. Jesse, you should really try this delicious con-nog-tion!

Marie Bardi-Salinas: Hi, it's me, Marie Bardi-Salinas of the *Judge John Hodgman* social media accounts. One thing you may not know about me, Jesse, is that I love eggnog mixed with orange soda. Just like everyone else in the world! You will also like it. You will also become one of us. No one is making me say this right now.

Joel Mann: Hi, Judge and Jesse. It's me, Joel, from WERU in Orland, Maine. (*Stiltedly.*) Just wanted you to know that I enjoy eggnog with orange soda. I love it sooo much. (*Flatly.*) Yum-yum. No one is making me say this. By the way, I got scallops!

(*Jennifer laughs.*)

Jesse Thorn: It was nice of Joel to record that one on a camcorder microphone. I have it here. Are you ready for me to give it a try?

John Hodgman: Yeah, 'cause I'm not going to drink it. I've had it too many times.

Jesse Thorn: I have a big, beautiful glass of it. It does have a creamsicle-y appearance. It didn't foam as much as I expected.

John Hodgman: Hm! Taking a sip. Very nicely keeping it all off-mic for you misophonics out there.

Jennifer Marmor: Mm-hm. He's a pro.

John Hodgman: He's a pro.

Jesse Thorn: It's a pretty good drink.

John Hodgman: Pretty good drink, right?!

Jesse Thorn: Pretty good drink!

(*Jennifer agrees.*)

I'm not going to race to make it more. It's not like I'm going to constantly be going to the grocery store for more nog and orange soda to make it more, but it is a pretty nice drink. I think citrus goes well with the kind of spicy seasonings that are in eggnog. And citrus and something creamy go together well, as in a Sherbert or a creamsicle.

John Hodgman: Absolutely. Here's what I'm saying to everyone out there: give it a try. It's a good, frothy, creamy, orange Julius-y holiday treat. Now, this was introduced to us, as you know, by our listener Pam from Seattle. And we, Jesse—you and I got to meet Pam after our Van Freaks Roadshow livestream not long ago. Which by the way, the livestream is still available only until January 2nd. You can get it at VanFreaksRoadshow.com. That's VanFreaksRoadshow.com. But we got to meet Pam from Seattle, and it was so cool to meet her virtually during the virtual meet and greet after.

And during that time, she pitched us a new holiday wassail that we will enjoy at the end of this program. But since we're all nicely nogged up, why don't we hear a holiday dispute?

Jesse Thorn: Here's one from Eliot from Evansville, Wisconsin.

[00:10:00]

“My wife’s sister just had a baby. My mom knitted a hat for the baby. She put it in an iPad box for me to wrap and deliver. I say it's gauche to give a gift inside the box of a luxury item that you bought for yourself. My mom says it's a nice box, and it would be a shame to throw it out. Could you please advise on how to handle this?”

John Hodgman: Knitted baby hat in an iPad box.

Jesse Thorn: John, as you know, I'm the PC to your Mac. I'm a PC user. I'm not a huge Apple guy, but I'm ready to stipulate here that Apple products come in nice boxes.

John Hodgman: Nice boxes!

Jesse Thorn: They really revolutionized the technology box game, just as Gateway 2000 once did by putting cow spots on boxes.

John Hodgman: Cow. Yeah, no, that fancy packaging—I mean, look, I know what everyone on the Reddit's—all the PC-heads are going to say on the Reddit: the fancy packaging is making up for a product for idiots who don't like to build their own PCs or whatever. I say they're wrong, but it's absolutely true. That's all part of the tactile experience.

So, Jennifer Marmor. You have a couple of

(Jennifer confirms.)

And one of these human children's still pretty much a baby, right?

Jennifer Marmor: Yes, still definitely a baby.

John Hodgman: So, when this baby was born—let's say, hypothetically speaking, that you had a sibling, and their partner's mother sent you a present. And you unwrapped the present, and it's an iPad box. And then you opened it, and it was a hand knitted baby hat. Walk me through what you would think is going on there.

Jennifer Marmor: I would see the iPad box and I would go, “Woah, this feels unnecessary. We are—”

John Hodgman: It's a little young for kids to have a tablets these days.

Jennifer Marmor: And also, it's my sister's mother-in-law. It's not even like a direct relation to me. I would be—I would be very confused. Why is she sending me such a generous gift? I mean, it's very kind. But why? And then I'd open it, seeing a knitted hat, and I would feel a wash of relief.

John Hodgman: Really?

Jennifer Marmor: Thank goodness that it's not an iPad for a baby from somebody that I'm not—

John Hodgman: Thank goodness that it's not an iPad? How dare you? Look—

Jennifer Marmor: Look, we use iPads in our home. (*Laughs.*)

Jesse Thorn: I thank you very much. I am the Apple Corporation. Thank you very much.

Jennifer Marmor: We have multiple—one for my husband's work, one for when we're on the road and my four-year-old needs something to do. And that's generally the only time, or when we're at the doctor. It doesn't matter. I think that a knitted hat is—

Jesse Thorn: The point is this, Jennifer. You're a bad parent. (*Chuckles.*)

Jennifer Marmor: Clearly, 100%.

Jesse Thorn: We're all thinking it, and I said it!

Jennifer Marmor: You're just saying what we're all thinking.

And yeah, no, a knitted hat is a lovely gift and very appropriate for a new baby.

Jesse Thorn: I have to say that this triggers a trauma for me.

Jennifer Marmor: Oh boy.

Jesse Thorn: Not what you said, Jennifer, but this question. And I'll tell you why. I think it's a very lovely and thoughtful gift. It's not that it comes in an iPad box, necessarily. That doesn't bother me that much, though I do have what I think is an elegant solution to that situation. It is the fact she gave it to Eliot to wrap.

(John laughs.)

Because all of my children's Christmas gifts just come in one big box from my mom, unwrapped and unlabeled. *(Chuckling.)*

John Hodgman: Oh no! Nooo!

Jesse Thorn: And in fact, sometimes my mom will buy something for my children on eBay, have it sent to our house with no note, no explanation. Just a box will come addressed to us with something in it that we have no idea what it is or who it's for. *(Laughing.)* And I have to guess that it came from my mom, call my mom, say, “Did you send this random thing to my house?”

And she says, “Yeah, that's for so and so.” It's just a total—it's a total baffler, and on the subject of be mindful of the work you leave for others, it leaves me and my wife to wrap everything as well as identify for whom each of these gifts is intended.

John Hodgman: I don't want to bring the big gavel down on your mom. I love your mom.

Jesse Thorn: She's a great one.

John Hodgman: To Jesse's mom, you got to wrap those presents or at least let Jesse know what they're for. Send an email after you order the thing letting Jesse know what he's got to expect.

[00:15:00]

Transition: Jingle bells.

John Hodgman: So, Jennifer Marmor, if you got that iPad box, that would make you confused but not excited. And you would feel relief when you saw that it was a knitted hat and not disappointment that you didn't get a delightful iPad.

Jennifer Marmor: I think so.

John Hodgman: I have a little anecdote that I like to tell. It just happened the past couple of days. I received—can you believe this?—I received a large box from Apple.

(Jennifer gasps.)

I had not ordered anything. I opened it up. There was a tall box inside, a beautiful gift box about the size of a bottle of wine, and then another box—another beautiful gift box that was sort of about the size of a couple of bricks. I had no idea what this was. There's a little card inside from Apple+ Television, a company I do no business with, saying, "This is for you. We're thinking of you these holidays." Isn't that nice?

Jennifer Marmor: Very nice.

Jesse Thorn: Really lovely.

John Hodgman: I want to say thank you. I would love to make a television show with you. Hint, hint, Apple+. Your gift worked out. So, I open the tall thing that looks like a bottle of wine. Guess what it is? Bottle of wine. It's nice. Nice bottle of wine, that's all that's needed. But here's this mystery box. About the size of, say, a brand-new Apple TV. I'm thinking to myself, what's in this beautiful box?

Jesse Thorn: At that point, John, you only had the Apple TV minus.

(Jennifer laughs.)

John Hodgman: I don't—it's not like I wanted—but it's like I do have a distinct hope that what's in this box is a 10-year contract for making more Apple commercials, please. That's all I really want. Oh, Apple+ TV, I've got a pitch for you. You know how they just did that play on Broadway where they just had the actors playing Roy Scheider and Richard Dreyfuss and Robert Shaw from *Jaws* talking about *Jaws*, behind the scenes at *Jaws*? Me and Justin can do that. We'll just do it as like behind the scenes—

Jesse Thorn: At *Jaws*?

John Hodgman: Look, I got ideas. It's just like behind the scenes. What happened when the cameras weren't rolling on the Apple ads.

Jesse Thorn: You play Roy Scheider?

John Hodgman: No, I play me.

(They laugh.)

No. Alright. I'll play Roy Scheider! I don't care what it takes! I'm in! I'm in wardrobe, as they say.

Jesse Thorn: Justin could be a handsome Richard Dreyfuss. No offense to Richard Dreyfuss.

John Hodgman: You should see the makeup they had them in for the *Goosebumps* thing that he just made.

But I'm talking about me here for a second. I opened the box. And it's not a contract for 10 years of more Apple commercials, sadly.

Jennifer Marmor: Rats.

John Hodgman: And I'm a little disappointed! But you know what it is? It's a beautiful wine coaster. It goes with the bottle of wine! It was just a really nice gift, but there was an element of confusion.

Oh, (*inaudible*) twist! My wife—who's a whole human being in her own right—looks at that box and goes, "I'm going to need that box. 'Cause I've been looking for a box to put this bunny lamp in to give to my mother."

But people out there, you need to be considerate of what your gift is advertising when you are sending it. Jesse, you mentioned that you had a solution for this, and I bet it's a good one. What's your solution for Eliot's problem?

Jesse Thorn: I'm not a crafty person. Jennifer, you're somewhat more crafty than me, although I wouldn't identify you as—you're the number one crafty person among the three of us.

Jennifer Marmor: (*Laughing.*) I'd say "somewhat" is the perfect description there.

Jesse Thorn: You're an enthusiastic baker. I would say number one—of the domestic skills, baking is the one about which I've seen you be most passionate.

(*Jennifer agrees.*)

But I think you're capable of making things in a way that I am not. I have gone on record as saying that truly my worst nightmare—indeed, my like waking up in a cold sweat in the middle of the night because I didn't prepare for the test—is being asked to make a diorama.

(*John and Jennifer shudder.*)

John Hodgman: Just even the word is upsetting to hear.

Jesse Thorn: But even I, no comedian Sara Schaefer when it comes craft and art—

Jennifer Marmor: Oh, extraordinary.

Jesse Thorn: Even I can say that I think I have a craft-based solution to this. One word: decoupage.

(*Jennifer and John ooh and ahh.*)

Start with the Apple box and some white glue and a few cool magazines or newspapers, and you've not only solved the Apple box problem, you've also solved the wrapping problem.

Jennifer Marmor: I love this.

John Hodgman: I'm going to big gavel on that. That's a great solution. And by the way, Eliot, your mom's wrong. That's the gift you always wanted for the holidays.

Transition: Jingle bells.

John Hodgman: Jesse cocktail hour is almost over.

[00:20:00]

But there is one more thing that you wanted to try—you specifically wanted to try, even though you don't drink alcohol, you wanted to try this cocktail.

Jesse Thorn: That's absolutely right. We got this in a message from Carly on the *Judge John Hodgman* Instagram, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#). Carly wrote to us: "At a Thanksgiving gathering last weekend, a friend of a friend iced my mulled wine and poured Sprite over it."

John Hodgman: Wow!

Jesse Thorn: I'll say this. I'm not a drinker. But you know, I've taken communion at church. I've had some champagne, and certainly I've had Sprite before. I always think that mulled wine smells nice.

John Hodgman: It is. It's got that grapey, mustardy smell of Christmas; it fills up the whole house.

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughs.*) And I love mulled cider. This is sort of like a red wine spritzer.

John Hodgman: Yeah. So, but mulling wine, you—what you're doing is you simmer red wine, and they recommend a fruity red wine like Zweigelt—fruity red wine with a little bit of orange juice and orange peel and some cloves and some cardamom and some cinnamon-mon, and then also some brandy.

Now, look, let's just say anyone who's writing a recipe for mulled wine on the internet, on—let's say—the *New York Times* cooking, don't tell me to put a liter of red wine in when red wine only comes in bottles of 750 milliliters. You're causing me a lot of problem there. Again, I'm not going to make a three-quarters recipe. But I did have brandy. I put a little Armagnac, which is an apple brandy. And I also put in a little Dry Curacao, which unlike Blue Curacao which is really sweet, dry Curacao is a more—it was developed by David Wondrich, the cocktail maven, and a friend of mine and the podcast, to be a drier orangey brandy. And I think the mulled wine portion of this came out really nicely. I tried it, and I'm

not normally a fan, but I like it. I'm not normally a fan of wine, but I liked this a lot. So, I'm going to go grab my now chilled mulled wine—or what we call chilled wine.

(They laugh.)

So, I'm going to taste this chilled wine first. I've just poured a little out of a Yeti thermos. Yeti, sponsor *Judge John Hodgman*. 'Cause it's supposed to be served warm. I'm gonna try it cold, and then I'm gonna Sprites it up. You know what? It tastes great cold. I may even like this cold better than I like it hot.

Jennifer Marmor: Kind of like a wintry sangria.

John Hodgman: Yeah, it's great! Now on the original holiday office party taste test, we also added Sprite to eggnog and that was no good. *(Can opens.)* So, I'm a little dubious about adding Sprite to this. But how much did you add, Jesse? I see you're ready to go.

Jesse Thorn: Jennifer prepared this for me. She's something of a mixologist.

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah, it's one of my other hobbies. Not a ton, just enough to make it a spritz, you know.

John Hodgman: Okay, so like not half and half.

Jesse Thorn: 2/3rds? 1/3rd maybe?

Jennifer Marmor: 1/3rd. Yeah, that's what I'd say.

John Hodgman: Cheers. Let's try it. Yeah. I don't mind that at all. For once, Sprite didn't ruin something.

(Jennifer laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: There's an element to it that I often share with my wife when I try her mixed drinks. It about 65% just tastes like alcohol. *(Chuckles.)*

(John agrees.)

Like, no matter what it is. Alcohol is very strong. I know it's supposed to carry flavors and so forth, and it does, but anything alcoholic tastes like booze to me. But I have to say, this is a pretty nice drink.

(Jennifer agrees.)

John Hodgman: I'm getting some apple cheeks off of this. I'm getting some, you know—and you can hear the little jingle bells in my cup. *(Ice rattles prettily.)*

Jennifer Marmor: So festive!

John Hodgman: I would say that I like this a lot, and I would serve it at a cocktail party!

Jesse Thorn: *(Beeping.)* Oh, John! I just heard the slow cooker alarm. That means that our first appetizer is ready. Cocktail hour is over. We're gonna take a quick break. When we come back, some truly alarming cocktail weenies.

(They laugh.)

We'll be back in just a second on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. We're having our holiday party, and it's now appetizer time!

John Hodgman: Appetizer time. Alright, Jesse. Do you remember back a little while ago in our condiment crimes episode with Nick Wiger and Amelia from the *Doughboys*? When someone's—we learned about someone's grandma who put grape jelly on her pepperoni pizza?

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughing.)* Yeah, I do remember that.

John Hodgman: Two great tastes that go together?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. *(Doubtfully.)* Two great tastes that go together. *(Laughs.)*

[00:25:00]

John Hodgman: *(Singing.)* Reese's, Pepperoni, Grape!

Do you know what also goes great with grape jelly?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Obviously, little hot dogs.

John Hodgman: Little hot dogs! That's right. Natalie wrote in from Pennsylvania that, quote, "This one is a staple at my parents' house for Christmas or New Year's: cocktail weenies in jelly/mustard sauce. Combine one part mustard to three parts grape jelly and cook the cocktail sausages in the sauce in a slow cooker for two to three hours."

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. That's how long you cook things in slow cookers, John.

John Hodgman: Oh sure, especially things like, you know, cocktail wieners—which are already cooked.

Jesse Thorn: You want to meld the flavors!

John Hodgman: Also, I think it thickens it up. There's something that definitely happened. Now, I had to simmer mine, because I don't have a slow cooker. But I simmered it on slow for about two hours. First of all, I used Coleman's Hot English Mustard, because I had some leftover, which I like. And I also used—but I used like an organic, like Nature's Promise Concord Grape Spread. Probably you should be putting in like classic Smucker's or Welch's or really purple grape jelly. Probably that's what is originally called for in Natalie's family. And also, because if it's purple and yellow, maybe it turns to a different color than what I got out of this natural, organic jelly garbage.

Because what I got is not (*stammering*)—it's—you don't—I have a—there's a photo of it available on the show page and Instagram of what I got, appropriately plated on a Dixie plate. And it does not look like three cocktail weenies, let me put it that way. This stuff is brown, and it does not look good. What ingredients did you use there over at MaxFun Central?

Jennifer Marmor: We used—well, we used beef cocktail wieners, because I just grabbed them. Because I was at the store with a person who does finger painting, and he was not happy to be there. So, I just grabbed him and then realized later that they were beef, which—

Jesse Thorn: But that's okay. That's nice, because that means—you don't eat pork, so it's nice that you can partake.

Jennifer Marmor: Exactly. So, it was a happy accident.

Jesse Thorn: Imagine, Jennifer, how disappointed you would have been if you hadn't had the opportunity to taste these cocktail wieners.

Jennifer Marmor: (*Laughs.*) I would've been disappointed! And we used—let's see, Heinz yellow mustard, because that's what I had at my house.

John Hodgman: Yeah. That's good. That's a good mustard. I'm going to say it right now, and this is going to be very controversial. And I want to—this is just me talking. No one should get angry at Jennifer or Jesse on this. Heinz yellow mustard? Better than French's. Yeah.

Jennifer Marmor: Woooh. I was a little worried that I was gonna get a little flack for not having French's. Because Heinz, I mean—it's just—

John Hodgman: It's better. Heinz is better.

Jennifer Marmor: Okay, good. I'm not a huge mustard-head, so I'm glad.

John Hodgman: Top ketchup, top mustard. Sorry. Sorry, French's.

Jesse Thorn: I'm on record, the best mustard is the one that comes in a glass mug that looks like a beer barrel.

(Jennifer agrees.)

John Hodgman: That's very good mustard too.

Jennifer Marmor: Jesse is on record. Listen to “Condiment Crimes” if you haven't. Yes.

John Hodgman: It's a great episode of the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Jesse Thorn: Love those barrel mugs.

Jennifer Marmor: It sounds cool!

John Hodgman: Alright, but I interrupted you, Jennifer. So, Heinz Yellow Mustard and grape jelly.

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah, and the grape jelly—I can't remember. I just grabbed a jar that seemed reasonable. I almost got the Smucker's that you can just squeeze out of the thing, but then I was like, “No thanks.” So, I think it was maybe Vaughn's Signature Select or whatever.

Jesse Thorn: Oh, that's the best one they have there at Vaughn's.

Jennifer Marmor: That's their signature.

Jesse Thorn: Mr. Vaughn signed that himself.

(They chuckle.)

John Hodgman: He said, “I select this one, Don Vaughn's.”

Jennifer Marmor: So, yeah. That's what we did. And I borrowed a slow—or I borrowed an instant pot from my neighbor upstairs that has a slow cooker function on it. Shout out to Sean and Megan.

John Hodgman: Good job, Sean and Megan.

Jennifer Marmor: Who I don't know if they even listen to this show but shout out anyway; they rule. And yeah, I was talking to my husband about it, and he goes, “So, what are you making for this year's holiday party?”

And I told him, I was like, “Oh, so these cocktail weenies with a sauce that's made out of grape jelly and mustard?”

And he goes, (*casually*) “Oh yeah, I know those weenies.”

(*Jesse and Jennifer cackle.*)

John Hodgman: Really? He knows those weenies?!

Jennifer Marmor: He knows those weenies! He goes, “Yeah, that's a popular tailgate item.” He's from the Midwest.

John Hodgman: I was genuinely wondering whether Natalie was pranking us with this.

Jennifer Marmor: Nope.

John Hodgman: But it's a real thing. How about that? Okay.

Jennifer Marmor: It's a real thing.

John Hodgman: And how did yours come out? Can I take a look?

Jennifer Marmor: Um, it is brown. Yes.

John Hodgman: Yeah, about the same. I think yours looks a little smoother than mine. Like, I mean—but this is not something you want. Like, get a—

Jennifer Marmor: But I don't think the point of it is to look appealing.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. This is what—they look like they're in barbecue sauce.

[00:30:00]

And I think that we've, in many ways, created an under-seasoned barbecue sauce here, right?

John Hodgman: Maybe it's because we're—maybe it's because we're across the country from each other. But I mean, honestly, come on. You know what this looks like.

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughs.*) Yeah, it looks like (*playfully scolding*) cocktail weenies in barbecue sauce, John!

John Hodgman: Alright, we've danced around this long enough. Let's give it a try.

Jesse Thorn: We're gonna do our best not to eat on microphone, but if you're seriously misophonic, apologies in advance.

John Hodgman: I guess I gotta get some more sauce on here, because what I'm just tasting is little smokies, which are great. I have no problem with that, little cocktail franks.

Jennifer Marmor: I don't hate it.

Jesse Thorn: I'm going to say this. I tasted the spoon as I was warming these up, because Jennifer made them in her slow cooker and brought them into the office. I warmed them up on the stove. I thought in advance, "This is probably just going to be sweet from the grape jelly, and you won't even notice the grapey-ness, and it'll just taste like they're in barbecue sauce or a baked bean sauce kind of deal." And when I tasted that spoon, I thought, "Uh-oh! This really tastes like grape jelly!"

(Jennifer laughs.)

John Hodgman: Yeah, it's giving a lot of grape.

Jesse Thorn: I said to myself, "Oh no!" I said. *(Laughs.)* But! When I ate these little smokies, you know what I did after I put the first one in my mouth and chewed it up?

Jennifer Marmor: What's that?

Jesse Thorn: I put a second in my mouth and chewed it up!

Jennifer Marmor: Oooh!

Jesse Thorn: I enjoyed this very much!

John Hodgman: Let me say, I was expecting to really dislike this. And sometimes dreams come true.

(They laugh.)

I think that I overthought it. I think maybe that Coleman's Hot English Mustard, which one of my favorite mustards—maybe that wasn't the right thing. I feel like I should have just gone with straight up grape jelly. I shouldn't have tried to *(inaudible)* it or anything fancy, because something's not working right here. And honestly, it may simply be the fact that when I was a kid, when I went to the dentist, I would get fluoride treatments, and it was always grape flavor. And I hate the grape flavor now. I don't like grape soda, and I don't like any of that, and it is giving a lot of grapes. So, it's not for me. I have this question. Are your all-beef little smokies, weenies, whatever you want to call them—are they tender?

Jesse Thorn: Mine are pretty tender.

John Hodgman: Pretty tender?

(Jennifer confirms.)

Mine are a little tough.

Jennifer Marmor: Tender and mild.

John Hodgman: Tender and mild—? *(Snorts a laugh as he gets the joke.)*

Alright, I mean, we've got a lot more show, but should we just end there?

Jesse Thorn: We're gonna need a few kings to come in here and confirm that, Jen.

(Jennifer laughs.)

John Hodgman: Yeah, woow, that was the Gift of the Magi right there. That was amazing.

Jennifer Marmor: That was my gift, making you laugh. It's always a joy when that happens for me. *(Laughs.)*

Jesse Thorn: Jennifer, I just have to say, I'm really impressed that as a Jew you were able to come up with that.

(Jennifer laughs.)

John Hodgman: That was good.

Jesse Thorn: That was really good work.

Jennifer Marmor: Thanks!

Jesse Thorn: I'd expect that from a gentile like Judge John Hodgman, but—

John Hodgman: I was never gonna—I was never gonna get there.

(Jesse agrees.) The point is my weenies are tough. My sauce is brown, and it's too grapey for me. I'm not gonna eat a third. Jesse, you should continue to enjoy them. I'm just glad I didn't make the whole package of cocktail franks, so I can save the rest for where they belong: in blankets! Do we have another dispute before we go on to our next thing?

Jesse Thorn: Here's a gift-related dispute from Kim in South Florida. "When the holidays come around, I prefer people to just tell me what they want so I can get it for them. That way, nobody wastes time or effort blindly guessing the perfect gift. But my partner wants to be

surprised. He gets downcast anytime I ask him what he wants, even though we've both guessed before and missed the mark. Who's right?"

John Hodgman: Okay. Gift giving. Any time of year. Do you ask the person what they want, or do you figure it out and give them something that maybe they didn't even realize they wanted? Jesse, Jennifer, what do you think?

Jesse Thorn: In my family, the neurodivergence of my children has determined a new course our gift giving the last few years. Which is everyone knows exactly what they're getting. And the reason for that is simply that we had to lower the stakes on Christmas. (*Chuckles.*) Because it was leading to two weeks of intense dysregulation that we just couldn't deal with.

(John affirms.)

But! In a broader sense, I don't think there's anything wrong with telling someone something that you might like or asking someone what they might like if you don't have a good idea. I think that's fine. But my personal feeling about it is that a significant part of gift giving is to give someone something that they would not get for themselves. And that that element of surprise is central. I mean, I think there are situations—like with children—

[00:35:00]

—where if there's something that the person wants, they have different resources than you do, and can't get it for themselves. But if it's something that I could just get for myself, then I should just get it for myself. Why have someone else get it for me?

John Hodgman: My kids don't have Lyle Lovett's email address, for example.

(Jesse agrees with a laugh.)

It's one of the many resources that I have.

Jesse Thorn: That's why they can't send him the bolo ties that he asked for?

John Hodgman: I was just saying, now that I think about it, an email from Lyle Lovett is one of the perfect gifts. I'm dropping a hint to the world and the universe. Jennifer, you want to weigh in?

Jennifer Marmor: Sure. Yeah, my mother-in-law is very big on getting a list before the holidays. What does everybody want? It was always that way for my husband and his brother growing up. And that is not a way that my family functioned. You know, like I would ask my mom like, "Oh, some of my friends do make lists for their parents."

And my mom was like, "Well, what's the fun in that? There's no surprise there." You know?

John Hodgman: How did that work out for you? Were you getting things from your mom that you liked?

Jennifer Marmor: Yes, over—you know, we celebrated Hanukkah. And as a kid, I would roll my eyes at like the night that I would get like socks and pajamas or something like that. But as I've grown up like I've really come to appreciate that. And it's fun. And then, you know, there were other more fun gifts.

John Hodgman: Because in the Hanukkah gift giving tradition, there are some nights that are sock nights, and then there are some nights that are sort of more—

Jennifer Marmor: Like, you know, CD player night or whatever.

John Hodgman: CD player night is what I was gonna say.

(Jennifer agrees with a laugh.)

Jesse Thorn: And there are some nights that are like Akai CD player nights, and then there are some nights that are like Sony Sports CD player nights.

(Jennifer and John agree.)

John Hodgman: What makes this night unlike any other? Uh, it's Denon CD players this time.

(Jennifer laughs.)

By the way, I know that's not the same holiday. I'm bringing out the big gavel, case by case.

Transition: Jingle bells.

John Hodgman: Obviously, there are situations where like as your kids get older—do you know what I mean?—your mother-in-law, for example, is going to really rely on you, Jennifer, to give her some ideas of what they're into what's age appropriate. Or else, you know, grandparents are just going to be sending sides of baked salmon or whatever, what grandparents like. At the same time, though, if you are, let's say, a grandparent, and you don't know what your grandchildren are up to, one approach would be to... *(chuckling)* get to know your grandchildren and/or talk to their parents and say, “What are they into?” And then try to come up with something on your own before you go simply to *(defeated)* just tell me what to buy. On the other hand, there may only be the answer that you just need to tell the person what they want to buy.

Or if you're in a partnership and there's something you really want and you don't want to buy it for yourself for whatever reason, that's when you say to your wife or partner or whatever—whole human being their own right in your life—“I want some of those Made In Entree Bowls. If anyone's thinking of something for me for the holidays, let them think of Made In

Entree Bowls.” And maybe say that, you know, in April. And reinforce it month after month. The rule of thumb is try to get gift giving as far away from transaction as you can. It's an expression of generosity, not just a checking off of a list. If you find yourself just in a checking off of a list mode, take a beat and rethink about how you're doing it.

Transition: Jingle bells.

John Hodgman: And Kim, by the way, if you really want to surprise your partner? Give him a wine coaster in an iPad box. Surprise!

No more weenie talk, no more gift talk. It's time for five-cup salad. Kenny—our listener Kenny, writes, quote, “Please eat this. It was my granny's recipe. Everyone in my Kentucky hometown loves it so much. When Granny died, they fought over who got the original recipe card, which—as you will see—is pointless. Because you will never forget what each of the five cups are.” Jesse, please read out the five cups.

Jesse Thorn: “Cup one: canned pineapple, drained. Cup two: canned oranges, drained. Cup three: sweetened shredded coconut. Cup four: mini multicolored marshmallows. Cup five: sour cream.

John Hodgman: Yeees! No one saw the sour cream coming. This is what you do! You just mix it all up. Kenny writes, “This is a real recipe. Check the internet.”

Jesse Thorn: You'd think it would be Cool Whip or something.

[00:40:00]

John Hodgman: Yeah, you would think. I did check the internet to fact check this—because I also was expecting it to be kind of a Cool Whippy ambrosia salad or whatever. And the internet told me something that Kenny didn't bother to tell me. I'm glad I checked. Because once you mix all the five cups of ingredients together, you're supposed to refrigerate it five to six hours at a minimum. And sometimes it's referred to as 24-hour salad. And mine has been going for—mine has been congealing for 24 hours. I don't know about you two. How long has your five-cup salad been in the fridge, Jennifer Marmor?

Jennifer Marmor: Definitely over 12 hours.

Jesse Thorn: That seems like enough hours.

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah. I mean, over 12 for sure.

John Hodgman: Now, we'll post pictures of this, but Kenny describes it as looking like moon poop. And I see where he's coming from with this.

(Jesse agrees.)

It's like a multicolored cloud of unicorn vomit. And I don't know what it tastes like. You all don't know what it tastes like. Kenny has no idea what it tastes like! He's never had it before. He says, "I want you to tell me what it tastes like." So, let's try it.

Jennifer Marmor: John, did yours have—were you able to track down the mini multicolor marshmallows?

John Hodgman: Of course, I was. Why? Were you not able to?

Jennifer Marmor: I wasn't. No, they didn't have them at the store. I looked at two stores.

John Hodgman: Jennifer Marmor! You are the one who introduced the term mar-bits to my orbit—marshmallow bits.

(She confirms with a laugh.)

And I mean, at the very least, you could have kindly opened up a box of Lucky Charms.

Jennifer Marmor: I should have.

John Hodgman: And just picked out the marshmallows with tweezers, because I think that's what they're going for here. But no, I had to go online to get them. I mean, there are store brands of. But it's—you know, it's gotta be a pretty big-box grocery store with a very extensive baking area. So, you did not get the multicolored marshmallows. So, you do not get the moon poop experience. So, I'm going to reveal to you for the first time what mine looks like, and here it comes. Are you ready for this?

(Jennifer gasps.)

Jesse Thorn: It's dazzling.

Jennifer Marmor: Oh my god!

Jesse Thorn: Yours looks way cooler than ours.

Jennifer Marmor: Way better!

John Hodgman: And people will note that I'm serving it on an Amy Sedaris branded I Like You plate.

Jennifer Marmor: Oh, that's perfect.

John Hodgman: That was a tie-in promotional item for her book, *I Like You*. Because I was thinking—I don't know if Amy Sedaris, a treasure to the whole world, by the way—I don't know if she would like to eat five-cup salad, but I think she'd be interested in it. I think she'd

be curious. Amy Sedaris. Of course, the stars of *Dicktown* season 2, still on Hulu. Tell Taylor Swift. Watch it.

Jesse Thorn: Given that it's the holidays, I would suggest that what it makes me think of something that the Claymation Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer left behind.

John Hodgman: (*Chuckling.*) Oh, yeah. Yeah. I think that's possible. I'm gonna try them. Well, show me yours. That just looks like a bad potato salad. I'm not a big marshmallow person, but for this, I think you absolutely do need to have the multicolored marshmallows. You're gonna get the same taste sensation. But you understand, you eat first with your eyes.

Jennifer Marmor: Of course.

John Hodgman: Hello, this is an edited version of Judge John Hodgman stepping in to cover for the period of time when we were all eating the moon poop, so that you don't have to listen to us chewing. Alright. I believe we're all done. I will step away and regular John Hodgman will be back.

Well! I've just finished eating the moon poop. Verdicts?

Jennifer Marmor: I'm not a big coconut-head, I should say. This was the one that I was dreading trying the most.

Jesse Thorn: That's a deal breaker. The texture is particularly coconutty. The flavor is only marginally coconutty, because of all the other stuff going on. But the texture is very coconutty because of the shreds.

Jennifer Marmor: The shredded—mm-hm.

John Hodgman: Did you use the sweetened shreds or the unsweetened shreds?

Jennifer Marmor: Yes, that's what the recipe called for.

John Hodgman: 'Cause—yeah, I was concerned there might not be enough sweet in here. When you have marshmallows, mandarin orange slices, pineapple chunks, you need to have the sweetened coconut as well to offset (*chuckling*) the savory of the sour cream.

Jesse Thorn: I was looking forward to this one. To me, if you're talking about regional American food ways that will destroy your body, Southern food is the way to go. Easy-peasy, lemon squeezy. Every Southern food that will destroy your body is absolutely worth it. (*Chuckles.*) Your Midwestern foods that will destroy your body—your Cool Whip based casseroles and so forth—those are less consistently—those kinds of Betty Crocker foods, less consistently appealing to me. However, I will say this. I looked at this ingredient list.

[00:45:00]

And this was sent into us from Kentucky, which is sort of the dividing line between the South and the Midwest. But I think that this recipe falls squarely into the Cool Whip casserole Midwestern category. But I'll say, I looked at this ingredient list and I thought, "I like those things." I'll probably be into that. Having tasted it... I wouldn't kick it out of bed, as they say. But to me, it is just a canonical, definitional, not-worth-it food. If I'm going to eat a pile of candy and cream, there are so many things I would rather eat.

John Hodgman: There was no way in this multiverse I was going to like this. Because everyone knows I don't have a big fondness for sweets, and this is all sweets. But it reminds me of an anecdote my old friend, Amy Radford, told about working at a restaurant in Cape Cod.

"What if one of the customers asks us if use real butter in whatever?"

And the head chef said, "It's not real butter." I'm not going to do a Boston accent, but you have to imagine it that way. "It's not real butter. Tell them we use Whirl. It's a butter substitute, and it's goddamn delicious." As is this pudding! Or whatever it is. This salad!

Jesse Thorn: Wow! Wow!

Jennifer Marmor: (*Gasps.*) What a twist!

John Hodgman: I love it! I took two bites, and I just wanted to keep eating it. I'm going to have another bite now. Turn it down. This is the—you know, if you have misophonia, turn it down. (*Mouth full.*) 'Cause I'm not going to hold back. Hmm.

Jesse Thorn: Holy mackerel.

Jennifer Marmor: Biggest shock of my life.

Jesse Thorn: This is the last thing I expected. I am gob smacked! I'm not going to say what American election surprised me to this extent—

(*Jennifer laughs.*)

John Hodgman: I am not doing this for drama. I'm doing this because it's true.

Jesse Thorn: This is the kind of thing you don't admit to a pollster, but then when you get into that private booth, (*chuckling*) Judge John Hodgman yes for five-cup salad.

John Hodgman: Eat a whole bowl of five-cup salad. I got here to my office. I was—you know, I chilled it overnight. I brought it over to my office, put it in the fridge, and then I scooped it out onto this Amy Sedaris I Like You plate. A small amount. There was a lot left over, and I took the saran wrap off that thing. And I'm like, "Oh, I better keep this, because I might re-cover this and bring it home." And I was like, "No! I'm throwing out the saran wrap, because this is going in the garbage." Now I gotta fish that saran wrap out of the garbage and

save it! I want my whole family to eat this. And I guess the thing is, you gotta get the right marshmallows.

Jennifer Marmor: That's the key!

Jesse Thorn: It's a feast for the eyes. There's no question about that.

John Hodgman: What I should have realized was, with the pineapple and the coconut—I like those things. Pineapple is one of the only fruits that I like. So, there was going to be a pina colada element to this. And the marshmallows I got—I don't remember the brand. But I got them on a—you know, an online retailer. It's a pound of them. And as it happens, they were dehydrated marshmallows. If you want to have exactly what I had, I'll list all of the detailed brand names on the Instagram and on the show page.

Jesse Thorn: Let's take another break! When we come back, bacon enters the chat! (*Chuckling.*) Along with—and bacon enters the chat in a way that you will struggle to wrap your mind around.

(*John laughs.*)

Plus, more mustard, an update on a dollhouse, and Pam from Seattle's new secret beverage. We'll be right back on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, we're taking a break from our holiday party. I want to start by reminding everyone in Northern California and the San Francisco Bay area that we are headed back to SF SketchFest.

John Hodgman: Yeah, that's right! January 27th, Saturday at 4PM at the Palace of Fine Arts, there by the beautiful lagoon. We're gonna be doling out judgment to you, and obviously it's an all-ages show. So, weird dads, bring your only children and interesting tweens. Everyone go to get your tickets at bit.ly/JJHOSF24, or just go SFSketchfest.com, SFSketchfest.com. We are getting some cases in now, but we will need your cases to hear. If you want to come to the show and have your case be considered for adjudication live on stage, go to MaximumFun.org/jjho, as always.

Jesse Thorn: If you have a problem with my mom, she's going to be there!

[00:50:00]

John Hodgman: That's MaximumFun.org/jjho. Just let us know that you'll be at the show. We also have the Van Freaks Roadshow finale stream, right, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: That's something we're really, really proud of. It is a film we made of our final show in the Van Freaks Roadshow Tour in Brooklyn, New York City. It is really gorgeous to watch. Like, I really—I watched it when it livestreamed. We hosted a live watch party, and I'm really so thrilled at how beautiful it looks and how great it sounds. And it is a really fun show with some great holiday disputes and two giant Richard Kinds, and our friend Nico Lowry from the *Antiques Roadshow* wearing a classic Nico Lowry outfit—some of the grandest windowpane tweed you'll ever see in your life.

(John laughs.)

Go to VanFreaksRoadshow.com, and you can get yourself a ticket and watch it with your family over this special, holiday, quiet week.

John Hodgman: I mean, honestly, terrific last-minute gift ideas for you. SFSketchfest.com, VanFreaksRoadshow.com. I'll tell you something though about gifts. I received a couple of gifts this year that are better than anything. One of course, is spending so much time with my friends, Jesse and Jennifer and all of our *Judge John Hodgman* friends on the podcast and on the road. Also, the other day I went to Shopsin's and, you know, I was chatting with Zack Shopsin. And then he went back into the kitchen. And Roxy, who was my server, came over and said—she said, Zack just told me, “Never rush Hodgman out of here, even if we're busy. ‘Cause I just like it when he's around.” Oh my gosh!

That was such a special gift. And then I got this letter, literally overnight today—like 12:57AM this morning. I woke up to this letter. And I wanted to share it with you. It's from a listener named Katie. “I'm sending you this email here at the end of 2023, because the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast was a key part of getting me through the year. And I think whenever people create something that brings you joy, you should say thank you.” That's a good policy. Katie goes on, “I started listening, because the algorithm wouldn't shut up about you. I kept getting ads for your Portland, Oregon show, because I live across the river in Washington State. And I was on the hunt for new podcasts, so I decided to check it out, and I was immediately hooked.” Now, then Katie goes on to describe some difficulties and personal losses that I won't get into, because they're difficult and personal, et cetera.

And so, Katie goes on to write, “It may sound silly, but finding the podcast was the balm I needed. When things are bad, it's really lovely to hear a petty, low-stakes squabble. I listened to over nine years of JJHO in nine months, finally catching up on October 1st. And October 2nd, I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. In a way, you, Jesse, Jennifer, Monte, Joel, Jean, Valerie, you were all hanging out with me this year, holding my hand in these months of terror, helping me stay grounded with laughter and reminders that there is still beauty in the little moments and our relationships with others. So, thank you, thank you for the lovely, heartwarming, hilarious, and thoughtful show and the community that you've built around it. In a world that all too often is bleak and dark, it truly is a bright light. You are all better than a gallon of scallops, Katie.”

And you know, that last line really hit me. Because you know, there are candles in most of the celebrations of these year-end holidays. And they're there for a reason, because all of these holidays tend to correspond with the winter solstice, the longest night of the year. And it's a time at the end of a completely made-up idea of “year”. And a year, of course, is a

completely made-up idea, but darkness is not. We experience it. We're experiencing it now—literal and figurative, and it gets dark at 4:30 in the afternoon. And it is hard to remember when it gets light again. And that's why these holidays kindle literal lights against the darkness.

(Voice tight.) And was just really touched by that letter. And I wanted to thank all the listeners. The end. Bye! Sorry. Didn't mean to get choked up, but I just really wanted to thank you all for keeping us company. *(Voice gives out.)* Alright. Let's get back to the docket.

Unless you want to tell them—unless you want to tell them to become a member of Maximum Fun. That would be—Jesse, that'll get me out of this. Turn it into pure transaction, please.

Jesse Thorn: Become a member of Maximum Fun at MaximumFun.org/join.

John Hodgman: *(Heaving a sigh of relief.)* Thank God or Whatever.

Jesse Thorn: I met a dude named Eric at the flea market with whom I had a very similar interaction. I was very grateful for it. So, thanks Eric, and thanks to all of the folks out there who share these experiences with us and tell us that our work is meaningful. It means a lot to us. Let's get back to goofing around.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

[00:55:00]

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. It's our office holiday party.

John Hodgman: That's right. We are trying favorite holiday drinks and appetizers submitted by you, the listeners. And also, let's say debatable salads. And we've been having a very good time. But what else is going on, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: Well, while we've been having our party, there's been another party going on in parallel at Martha and Doug's house. Do you remember Martha and Doug, John? Doug, retired high school teacher who couldn't get over the fact that covid canceled his swan song high school production of the musical *Matilda*?

John Hodgman: Yes, of course. He also had a project, right?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, he had been building a dollhouse for Martha for 30 years, three decades.

(They chuckle.)

John Hodgman: A 30-year dollhouse project. And my memory serves, he was building it as a present for Martha. (*Stammering.*) What was it, Jennifer Marmor? Was it a wedding present? (*Chuckles.*)

Jennifer Marmor: It was a Christmas present.

John Hodgman: A Christmas present! Oh, well, this is very appropriate. Well, you know what the best present you can give someone is? A deadline. That's why I told Doug to get it done by Christmas! Stop messing around with the dollhouse, get it done. And apparently Doug did it! And now we have some audio from the dollhouse's unveiling at their Christmas party, which just occurred! Jennifer Marmor, will you play the tape, please?

Clip:

Martha: Doug you know, people are here. They're waiting. It's been 35 years. So, what would you like to tell us?

Doug: I don't think they've been waiting as long as you have.

(*Someone laughs.*)

Martha: What would you like to tell us about what you have here?

Doug: What I have here is a dollhouse that, as Martha explained, has been built since the last 35 years. But I finally finished it! And I'm going to unveil the inside. So, here's the inside of the dollhouse.

Speaker: Holy cow!

Martha: Oh my—!

Speaker: Anybody know how to turn off a light switch in that place?

(*Chuckling.*)

Martha: No.

Doug: I am very appreciative of Judge John Hodgman, who is not here today. But I am appreciative of him getting me to do this. And I've worked on it for three months, plus the 35 years, and finally completed it. So, I feel very, very satisfied!

Martha: I would like to invite everybody to join me in making a toast to Doug. The libation that we're toasting with is the traditional Judge John Hodgman holiday libation of choice, eggnog and orange soda! Cheers to Doug!

Doug: Thank you, hooray!

Jesse Thorn: Congratulations to Doug and Martha. It's a beautiful dollhouse. You can see photos of it and video of the unveiling on the Maximum Fun website, the page for this episode of Judge John Hodgman, and on our Instagram, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#).

John Hodgman: Jesse, it's time for the entrees, the main course. But before we start hearing about them, do we have another holiday dispute?

Jesse Thorn: This one comes to us from Tony in Rochester. "I have beef with my brother Mike. When we go home for the holidays, it's a full house. Our parents, our sister, Mike's partner, my own wife, and our toddler."

(John whistles.)

"Mike doesn't want our daughter sleeping upstairs in the room next to his. Her crying upsets his sleep. But he also doesn't want to sleep downstairs on the air mattress, because we get up early, which also upsets his sleep. I think Mike should be a grownup."

(John laughs.)

I think Mike should be a grownup and sleep on the air mattress at his parents' house!

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: Well, obviously what Tony's saying is Mike should be a grownup and stop whining and accept there's a little kid in this house, a little nibbling, as they say. And that's going to be disruptive. I don't know. Are either of you going to visit family for the holidays of any kind?

Jennifer Marmor: Yes. We are going to my in-laws in Tucson over Christmas. This episode is obviously coming out after Christmas, but we have not hit Christmas yet.

John Hodgman: Tucson, let's do a show at the Rialto Theater, Jesse. Because I want to be able to breathe again! Best breathing I've ever breathed.

Jesse Thorn: Local promoters, contact CAA.

John Hodgman: This asthmatic gives 100 out of 5 stars for the low humidity atmosphere of the desert of Tucson. I loved it.

Jennifer Marmor: So does this frizzy haired person.

(John affirms.)

Much better for my hair looking normal.

John Hodgman: And you've got a couple little kids. A baby and—not a toddler per se.

Jennifer Marmor: No, he's like a kid-kid now.

John Hodgman: A kid-kid now. And what's the sleeping arrangement gonna be, do you know?

Jennifer Marmor: So, they have two guest rooms, which is pretty helpful. It's a three-bedroom house. So, presumably the kids would sleep in one room, and my husband and I will sleep in another. What I'm guessing will happen is that I will end up in the room with our four-year-old.

[01:00:00]

Because he's very attached to me at the moment. So, we'll see how it goes.

John Hodgman: But don't have (*stammering*)—that's the whole compound is full of just your family and the parental units.

Jennifer Marmor: Right. Shane, my husband's brother, lives in Tucson as well. So, they have their own home that they are in.

John Hodgman: Let me give you some more detail, so that we can decide where Mike is going to sleep this holiday season. By now it may be too late, but this is going to be a binding ruling for all holidays going forward. So, I got the impression—'cause we had to edit this for some length. But when Tony is saying that Mike doesn't want our daughter sleeping upstairs in the room next to his, that is to say, Mike and his partner are sleeping in what was once Mike's old room. Also, Mike's partner does not like to sleep on the air mattress, because they don't find it comfortable. So, both things are going to cause difficulty for Mike and Mike's partner. Where should Mike sleep?

Jesse Thorn: There's no solution to this where Mike doesn't have to eat it. And I think that that is central to this question. Like, what I am hearing here is that—I don't think Mike's issues or concerns are unreasonable ones. I think those do sound like inconveniences. I don't want to sleep on an air mattress, and I don't want a child to wake me up. But I don't see a solution where both of those issues are solved, even with other people suffering for Mike's sake. And I think Mike is just going to have to accept that his choices are eating it or paying for a place to stay.

(*Jennifer agrees.*)

John Hodgman: Yeah. Or getting some good earplugs!

Jesse Thorn: I sleep with earplugs, because my children wake me up, and the continuity of my sleep is important to my migraine regulation. And it does help a lot.

John Hodgman: There is a solution where Mike doesn't have to eat it though, which is that Tony and his wife and the toddler all sleep downstairs. And Mike gets his cozy sanctum of his old room with his old *Omni Magazine* poster above his twin racing car bed or whatever else he's got going on in there. I appreciate though that this is not just Mike crying about the crying. It's that Tony and his wife have a child, and Mike is feeling edged out of his own home by this child—by this huge life change that Tony and his wife are enjoying, I hope, with their new child and have put upon the rest of the family. Maybe Mike just feels like “there's no place for me in this house”.

In which case, I absolutely agree with you, Jesse, that—if it's within their means—that Mike and his partner should go find and enjoy being child-free and go get a hotel room. Go get a room! And maybe, if it's not exactly within their means, then maybe Tony—one nice holiday gift to Mike is, “Hey, I know this really bugs you a lot. Let me pitch in or give you a really nice room at a hotel nearby. And then you don't have to worry about it. And you can have a spa day or go down to the post stamp size pool they have next to the courtyard or whatever it is.”

Jesse Thorn: Or for that matter, stay with a friend, rent a spare room from someone else on a home sharing website.

John Hodgman: Yeah. But Mike, let me tell you, the solution is not get the child a room at a hotel. That's not legal. You can't get a single child a room in a hotel, no matter what you read in *Eloise*. Not allowed. Okay. Jesse, do you still have your mustard handy?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, there's mustard here.

John Hodgman: Alright, this one comes from Joe in New Berlin, Illinois. Joe writes, quote, “As a kid, my dad would always make us the same holiday breakfast—a bacon, peanut butter, and mustard sandwich.”

(Jesse “WOW”s in completely surprised horror.)

“Specifically, crunchy peanut butter, which you have to put on the toast when it's still warm, so it gets nice and melty, drizzled with yellow mustard.” Joe goes on to say, quote, “This sandwich has been questioned many times, but all who have tried it have enjoyed it, except for Brad.”

I don't know who Brad is, but I guess we're going to find out if we're a Joe or a Brad in this situation. Did you make this one?

Jesse Thorn: We're about to put it together right now.

John Hodgman: Let's zoom through time. We assemble mustard, bacon, and peanut butter sandwich.

Jesse Thorn: As they say in *Wayne's World*, (echoing "blub-blub-blub" noises).

John Hodgman: The sandwiches have been made nice and toasty, nice and nutty, bacon-y, et cetera.

Jesse Thorn: John, what are your initial impressions?

[01:05:00]

John Hodgman: I've been—well, my initial impressions are that my head is exploding from the amount of sugar that I just ate in that five-cup salad.

(*They laugh.*)

I really want something that's not sugar.

Jesse Thorn: Shall we all take our munches? Jennifer, you have one with turkey bacon there.

Jennifer Marmor: Yes. I do.

John Hodgman: Alright, here we go.

Oh, hi. It's me again. ASMR John, covering for misophonia John, Jen, and Jesse. I'm just speaking to the mic softly for you now, so that your ears are not disturbed by the sound of the chewing and the munching of the peanut butter bacon.

Jesse Thorn: I've done my chewing and munching.

John Hodgman: And now Jesse has done his chewing and munching. Jennifer Marmor has also completed her sandwich. I'll now bring you back to regular Judge John Hodgman.

And we're back! (*Singing the Wayne's World sound effect.*) Whatever. Tell me what you think. Jennifer.

Jennifer Marmor: The mustard adds a tang that I don't know that I need, but I didn't hate in the way that I really thought I was going to.

Jesse Thorn: So, your problem was bacon plus mustard, not bacon plus peanut butter? Because I love mustard on a BLT.

John Hodgman: Woah, that's the biggest jaw drop since I liked five-cup salad! Mustard on a BLT?! Jesse Thorn, what an insult to mayo-nnaise!

Jesse Thorn: I put mayonnaise on there too, don't worry.

Jennifer Marmor: I know that people put like bacon on burgers and mustard on burgers, like it all makes sense. But I think just—

Jesse Thorn: But they don't put peanut butter on burgers! (*Laughs.*)

Jennifer Marmor: No. But there was something about the peanut butter plus bacon that read to me as like a sweet and savory—like, when people added bacon to everything in the—let's say the aughts.

John Hodgman: Yeah, the aughts. The aughts was a very bacon-y decade.

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah, it was a very bacon-forward time, so like I'm used to bacon in things that—

Jesse Thorn: Where bacon doesn't belong?

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah. The mustard was the weird one for me.

John Hodgman: I'm sensing this is 100% no for you, Jesse.

Jesse Thorn: I, too, need food in my stomach to go with the sheer volume of orange soda, eggnog, and five-cup salad that's in there.

John Hodgman: Don't give me all the parfait layers of what we put into our bodies today.

(Jennifer laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: And so, I may take a few more bites. I also don't feel like walking over to the taco truck and spending money on lunch today after what I've eaten. (*Laughs.*) But yeah, this is a bad sandwich.

John Hodgman: Well, people like what they like. And so, no one's ever wrong. Except for Jesse in this case, because this is a perfect sandwich. I've never had this before, and I liked it!

(Jesse "wow"s.)

I thought it all went pretty good together. I agree with—I mean, obviously, Jesse, you're not wrong. It wasn't for you. That's fine. And to me, I love peanut butter, and I love bacon, and I love mustard! And I was thinking to myself as I was assembling the sandwich, "Am I wasting this peanut butter and this bacon? Like, I could be eating these things separately and really having quite an afternoon for myself. Am I wasting it by putting it together?"

But I found the combination—the double savory—of those two things, plus the smokiness with the peanut butter—the smokiness of the bacon with the peanut butter rather worked for me. I think mustard does not need to be at this party. I think that mustard is not a—is an uninvited guest who is pretty much inoffensive. But maybe if the mustard had more oomph, it

would be adding more. But right now, it's just a little bit of a tang. There's one thing that's missing from the sandwich, and I am very confident that a number of *Judge John Hodgman* listeners right now have been yelling at their smart speakers and their car speakers about this missing ingredient.

To quote Nick Offerman, at the end of the music video for the band Tweedy, which is Spencer Tweedy and Jeff Tweedy—their music video for the song “Low Key”, Nick Offerman at the end says, “More banana.” This needs more banana! Because there is a famous sandwich which is peanut butter, bacon, and banana. And that's the Elvis. That is what Elvis Presley loved. And he loved his like griddled like a grilled cheese. But since I've never had the courage or fortitude to try an Elvis sandwich—peanut butter, bacon, and banana—I decided now's my chance.

[01:10:00]

So, on the other side of the sandwich, I added banana. I did not add mustard, because I wanted the closest to the thing. Because I'm just trying a thing for the first time.

Jesse Thorn: This is in deference to the king.

John Hodgman: To the—yeah, exactly. So, I'm going to give this a try, and I'm going to tell you how it feels. Because to me this feels weird, but I'll tell you in a second. I'm going to bite right in the middle.

Jesse Thorn: He really did bite in the middle like he was in a commercial for sandwiches.

(Jennifer confirms.)

Jennifer, I have to say, the Elvis sandwich—which I have also never tried—is immensely more appealing to me than this sandwich. And having eaten this sandwich with the bacon peanut butter together, I'm imagining the Elvis sandwich and thinking it sounds perfectly fine.

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah. I've eaten peanut butter and banana sandwiches before.

Jesse Thorn: I done that too, and that's a great sandwich!

John Hodgman: As someone who has never had peanut butter and banana or bacon and banana, all three of them together, perfectly fine. Perfectly fine-tastic! That's a good sandwich too. Better. Better than the other one, I would agree.

Jesse Thorn: Peanut butter and banana is my father-in-law, Steve's, favorite sandwich. Shout out to Steve.

(Jennifer “aw”s.)

Love that guy.

John Hodgman: If you don't like banana, you're not going to like this. And at first I was like, this is too banana for me, but it is offering what the mustard is not, which is a sweetness to counteract the smoky savoriness of the bacon and peanut butter. Now, you might not need banana if you are using a commercial grocery store peanut butter that has a lot of sugar in it. I was using the best, Teddie Chunky, no sugar. So, the banana might be overkill in that case. But I think that this is a really interesting combo. That said, I probably would just go bacon and peanut butter any day of the week. I thought that tasted pretty good too.

Jesse Thorn: I think there's a reason it's a valid holiday morning treat. I think that in a family with a mother and a father, if the mother does the heavyweight holiday cooking—which is often the case. I'll be clear, in my family I'm the one doing the heavyweight cooking, but in a lot of families, it's the mother—there's something special about the dad doing a little, weird something the next morning for the kids.

(Jennifer chuckles.)

John Hodgman: It's not just peanut butter, mustard, and bacon. There is also a little schmear of weird dad to it. You're absolutely right.

Jesse Thorn: It's lovely if the dad even is just making waffles. I think that's a nice thing for the next morning. But if it's Kenji López-Alt, and he's combining all of the different elements of the Thanksgiving dinner into a waffle maker—

(They laugh.)

Which is one of his weird recipes.

John Hodgman: It is, you might say, uh, bananas.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. I think that that is a lovely way to connect with your children and give your partner a break. And a classic expression of weird daddery.

(Jennifer agrees.)

John Hodgman: Two great tastes that go together. Peanut butter sandwich and milk. What is the perfect pairing, beverage-wise, for a bacon, peanut butter, and mustard sandwich? Maybe we have to turn to Pam. Pam's new holiday mixer!

Jesse Thorn: So, Pam came to one of our VIP sessions in the livestream of *Judge John Hodgman*, which—as of the release of this show, you still have a couple of days to purchase and watch, and I think you should. Because we're really, really proud of it. I think it's really a cool thing.

John Hodgman: Yeah, definitely go to VanFreaksRoadshow.com to watch our stream, our recorded live show. It's wonderful. It's also the last place you can ever get a *Ragnarök* survival kit. And when they're gone, they're gone. So, VanFreaksRoadshow.com.

Jennifer Marmor: And they're flying! They're flying off the virtual shelf.

John Hodgman: (*Mouth full.*) They're flying. They're flying. Flying off the virtual shelves. I'm going back to chewing. I'm talking.

Jesse Thorn: Anyway, go to Van Freaks Roadshow. It becomes not available forever on—what?—January 2nd? So, go do that. Pam met us—or we met Pam—in one of the VIP sessions for that show. We were so excited to meet her and to interact directly with the person who introduced us to orange soda and eggnog. And she said, “Well, I've got a new drink for you to try.”

(*They chuckle.*)

This is sort of like if Grant Achatz, the molecular gastronomy chef, said to you, “I've put a new food in a bubble!”

(*They laugh.*)

John Hodgman: Got to try it! Gotta try it.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, gotta give it a try. Pam is the combining-two-drinks-together master.

John Hodgman: Alright. And it has three ingredients. Right, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: That's absolutely correct. This is a combination of iced coffee, Cherry Coke.

[01:15:00]

And milk.

John Hodgman: Alright. Now, I'm going to make it. Pam, I don't remember if she gave us proportions. So, I want to drink what you're drinking. I want what you're having. What's the proportions that I should make it to?

Jesse Thorn: I think you should go half and half coffee and Cherry Coke, and milk as you might add it to coffee.

John Hodgman: And Pam did say it could be any kind of milk that you like.

(*Jennifer confirms.*)

Right. Okay.

Jesse Thorn: Now, there was a viral thing about adding milk to Coke a year or two ago. And the problem with adding milk to Coke—which as soon as I heard about it—many people were repulsed. I thought, yeah, I could see that. The problem is that it will curdle the milk. But I think having the coffee in there is enough that the milk will not be curdled by the—I guess, the acidity of the Coke.

John Hodgman: On *Laverne & Shirley*, Shirley Feeney's favorite drink was milk and Pepsi. And that was something that profoundly grossed me out as a child. Just thinking about it. I've never tried it. And I'm going to tell you something right now, even though I said, you know, *Harry Met Sally* style, "I'll have what she's having,"—in honor of my repulsion as a child and also because I didn't want 12 cans of Cherry Coke hanging around, I did get Cherry Pepsi.

(Jennifer "ough"s in quiet disappointment.)

I'll be right back. I'm going to make it. And I promise you, I'm just going to make it real quick. I'm not just going to go out and eat the rest of this sandwich. I'll be right back.

(Jennifer chuckles.)

Jesse Thorn: Jennifer has been kind enough to provide me with half Coke, half coffee in a Maximum Fun tumbler that you would have if you were a member of Maximum Fun. So, be sure to join and get some Maximum Fun glassware. I'm gonna add some milk to this. I'm using regular whole milk. Jennifer, it looked like you preferred almond milk?

Jennifer Marmor: I know, I've been making a lot of tweaks to these recipes. But I didn't feel bad about the almond milk, because Pam said milk of our choice.

John Hodgman: Pam said, "Milk. Of. Choice."

Jennifer Marmor: And I didn't feel bad about the other tweaks too, but—

John Hodgman: No, you shouldn't feel bad about the tweaks. Tweaks are what—tweaks are the spice of life. The spice of life is tweaks.

Jesse Thorn: Are we gonna give this a try?

John Hodgman: Yeah. Here, cheers.

Jennifer Marmor: Cheers.

John Hodgman: And we all lightened it to about the same color of light brown. And there's no question that you changed our lives forever when you suggested eggnog with orange soda. And we're so grateful that you're a listener and a member of Maximum Fun. Yet, you're like Icarus flying too close to the sun with this one. Your wings have melted, and you've fallen

into the Cherry Pepsi ocean that I'm currently drowning in. This isn't for me. Let me just say it that way.

Jesse Thorn: As I tasted this, I remembered one of the reasons I don't drink coffee. It takes so much practice to think that it tastes good.

(They chuckle.)

And I do not have that practice. I immediately was like, “Oh right! Coffee tastes bad to me!”
(Laughs.)

John Hodgman: Maybe if I had used Cherry Coke instead of Cherry Pepsi, this would have come together better. And maybe if I had used just like regular iced coffee as opposed to cold brew, which tends to be very intense, it would have blended a little bit better. Maybe if I'd used, you know, dairy milk. I don't know. But what I'm getting in here is a big fight between cherry and cold brew. And I usually don't want to have anything to do with either of them. So, why am I hosting this bar fight in my mouth that's now in my stomach?

Jesse Thorn: When I could just be drinking Cherry Coke, one of the best drinks ever!

Jennifer Marmor: And I feel this way, but the opposite. I could just be drinking iced coffee! But it feels like I'm drinking iced coffee through cherry ChapStick, and I don't like it.

John Hodgman: Three great tastes that should have never gotten together.

Jesse Thorn: I think we can all agree that if you're going to have flavored ChapStick, it should be Dr. Pepper flavored Lip Smackers.

Jennifer Marmor: 100%.

John Hodgman: By the way, we still haven't—and perhaps for next year—we've not, the three of us, hoisted together mugs of hot Dr. Pepper with lemon, a holiday warmer that we've discussed before. So, let's put that on the docket for 2024. And let me say once again, thank you, Pam, for changing our lives and getting this whole thing going, because it's so much fun to do this with my two friends, Jennifer Marmor and Jesse Thorn. I wish you only happiness and peace during this year-end season, and I can't wait to spend all of 2024 with you just judging it up.

Jesse Thorn: Thanks, John. I feel the same way about both of you guys. And of course, thank you to all of our audience. You're the reason that we're able to do this, and happy holidays to you and yours.

Jennifer Marmor: I also want to thank Marie Bardi-Salinas, who's been running our social media, and A.J. McKeon, who's been editing for us.

[01:20:00]

Daniel Spear, who also helped us out with some editing and other stuff this year. And I also wanted to thank Valerie Moffat, our former editor who covered for me while I was on maternity leave, who brought such a funny spirit to the show.

John Hodgman: An incredible sense of humor. Thank you, Valerie!

Jennifer Marmor: And Joel Mann.

John Hodgman: Joel Mann!

Jennifer Marmor: A gem at WERU FM. Jean Grae, who's filled in for us, who sent us some great tape today. And Monte Belmonte.

John Hodgman: Monte Belmonte of New England public radio.

Jesse Thorn: Stephen Colon.

(Jennifer and John agree.)

John Hodgman: And Laura Volk, who made our whole live tour happen. I mean it's just been a wonderful family to be a part of all these many years and looking forward to spending time with you, our listeners, our family too, in 2024. So, have some of these foods, try them out if you want.

Jesse Thorn: Watch that Van Freaks Roadshow livestream! You've only got a few days left.

John Hodgman: And if you get the *Ragnarök* survival kit, don't eat the mayonnaise. It's one of the rare times I'll ever see it, but it will kill you.

Jesse Thorn: And if you're in San Francisco, we'll see you at SketchFest. And we'll talk to you next time and next year on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

Speaker 1: Maximum Fun.

Speaker 2: A worker-owned network.

Speaker 3: Of artist owned shows.

Speaker 4: Supported—

Speaker 5: —directly—

Speaker 6: —by you!