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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn, here with Judge John Hodgman.

John Hodgman: This week's episode was recorded live at the beautiful and strangely-goes-around-a-corner Majestic Theater in Madison, Wisconsin.

Jesse Thorn: Oh, well, this was a great time. There's pizza. There is a very intense dispute about neighborhoods in Madison. And we don't know neighborhoods in Madison, so our understanding will become your understanding. Because we—

John Hodgman: We're lucky we got out of there alive, basically.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, it was incredible, and we got to see Rob Thomas—not that Rob Thomas. The Rob Thomas from the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, the guy who wears Minion sleep shorts to go outside and check his mailbox—and previously, walk his dog, I believe. If I'm remembering correctly.

John Hodgman: Absolutely. We had a great time at the Majestic Theater in Madison. The show was a blast. Let's go to the stage at the Majestic in Madison, Wisconsin.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Madison, Wisconsin—you came to us seeking justice and we're here to deliver it at the Majestic Theater!

(Thunderous cheers and applause.)

The court of *Judge John Hodgman* is now in session. Let us bring out our first set of litigants. Please welcome to the stage, Matt and Jess!

(Cheers and whistles.)

Tonight's case, "Anti Crust Law". Matt brings the case against his wife, Jess. He loves to make all kinds of pizza, including his beloved Detroit-style.

(Scattered cheers.)

Jess says, "That's not pizza. It's only pizza if it's round." Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide. Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and delivers an obscure cultural reference.

(Cheers and applause.)

John Hodgman: *(In a Tom Waits impression.)* They hung a sign up in our town—

Jesse Thorn: *(Interrupting.)* Oh Jesus, not this again!

John Hodgman: “If you live it up, you won't live it down.”

Jesse Thorn: This has been every stop on the tour.

(Laughter.)

John has been doing this.

John Hodgman: So, she left Monte Rio, son, just like a bullet leaves a gun!

Jesse Thorn: We have like ten more tour dates to go.

John Hodgman: *(Really getting into it.)* With her charcoal eyes and Monroe hair! She went and took that California trip.

Jesse Thorn: *(Blows air through his lips.)* I might have to quit.

John Hodgman: The moon was cold, and her hair's like wind! The moon's cold. Said, “Don't look back, just come on, Jim. Oh, you gotta hold on. Hold on. You gotta hold on. Take my hand, I'm standing right here. You gotta hooold on.”

(Speaking.) Bailiff Jesse Thorn, swear them in.

Jesse Thorn: Sort of brought it on myself.

Matt, Jess, please rise and raise your right hands. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God-or-Whatever?

(They swear.)

Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that he believes pizza should be spherical?

(They swear. The audience laughs.)

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

John Hodgman: Matt and Jess, you may be seated. For an immediate summary judgment in one of your favors, can either of you name the piece of culture that I referenced when I entered the courtroom?

Jess: It sounded like the Badger Fight Song. The

John Hodgman: Badger Fight Song!

(Laughter.)

Great guess. I love it! I'm putting it in.

Jesse Thorn: John, it would be legitimately amazing if he sang the Wisconsin Badgers Fight Song.

John Hodgman: Matt, what is your guess?

Matt: That sounded like it could be some sort of deep cut by Mark Cohen.

John Hodgman: Deep cut by—that's so deep I don't even know what you're talking about!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, not one of those famous Mark Cohen smash hits.

John Hodgman: No. All guesses are wrong. *(Bangs his gavel.)* The answer is—it was a song called “Hold On” by Tom Waits. This entire tour I'm only singing Tom Waits songs, as the cultural references. Little clue to those listening down the road, or maybe going to be up here on stage later. And for two reasons. One, I love Tom Waits. And two, it drives Jesse bananas, so.

Jesse Thorn: Absolutely nuts.

John Hodgman: That was “Hold On”, as performed by Tom Waits in his album *Mule Variations*. But technically that was a little wink to a recent—a beautiful cover of that song by the artist Madison Cunningham. Get it?

(A collective “ohhh” from the audience.)

Yeeeeeah! But now we have to hear your dumb case. So, listen—

Jesse Thorn: I like that reply really rode the line between aaah and uuugh.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Matt and Jess, before we get going, I am told that you were married right here on stage at the Majestic Theater—

(The audience “aw”s.)

—approximately 364 days ago. Is that correct?

(Jess confirms.)

So, would that mean—

(Cheers and applause.)

Yeah. So, would that mean that tomorrow is your first anniversary?

Matt: That's right.

John Hodgman: And that is—I believe that's the paper anniversary. Right. Oh, Jesse, you know, we should have gotten them a gift.

[00:05:00]

I'm really sorry. Well, I have some paper towels here.

Jesse Thorn: John.

John Hodgman: What's that?

Jesse Thorn: I got them a gift.

John Hodgman: Oh, you did, Jesse?

(Jesse confirms.)

Oh, that's great! I didn't realize.

Jesse Thorn: I just want to wish Matt and Jess a happy first anniversary. I went down to the Friends of the Madison Public Library, and I got you *Your Long Erotic Weekend: Four Days of Passion for a Lifetime of Magnificent Sex*, by Lana Holstein, MD, and David Taylor, MD.

(Laughter.)

You know, “Day one, you and your lover rekindle that spark, learning to tune in to each other's sexual energy.”

John Hodgman: Oh boy.

Jesse Thorn: “Day two, he pleases her and unleashes her inner sex goddess. Day three, she returns the favor for her warrior lover and pleases him as he's never been pleased before. Day four, the two of you become one in a mind altering, soul shattering, ecstatic union that rocks your world forever. With *Your Long Erotic Weekend*, you're not in sexual dullsville anymore! You'll learn how to awaken your sensual selves, rekindle that sexual spark, master the tantric secrets of orgasm, and take one another to heights of passion you've only dreamed about. This is sex like you've never had before. *Your Long Erotic Weekend!*”

John Hodgman: Wow. Okay, 4PM show. I'll remind, Jesse, 4PM show. Children in the audience. Happy Anniversary. I'm sure you're all planning out your Halloween costume, which is sexy bailiff.

(Laughter.)

Matt: Thank you.

John Hodgman: Alright, Jess and Matt, congratulations, and I hope you enjoy the book.

Jess: Thank you very much.

John Hodgman: But you're no longer in sexual dullsville. You're in the court of Judge John Hodgman.

(Laughter.)

Who seeks justice in this, my fake court of internet law?

Matt: I do, your honor.

John Hodgman: And you would be Matt. What is the nature of your complaint?

Matt: It was revealed to me approximately one year ago, that—

John Hodgman: *(Giggling.)* On your wedding night?

(Laughter.)

I can't wait to hear the rest of this sentence!

Matt: I discovered, through the telling of an anecdote, that Jess does not believe that non-circular pizzas are legitimately pizzas. And furthermore, that she will not eat one or permit one to be made in our home.

John Hodgman: Wow! Jess, what is your problem with non-round—?

Jesse Thorn: *(Interrupting.)* Wait, hold on. Hold on. We're ahead of ourselves. What was the anecdote that revealed this?

(Laughter.)

Matt: So, this was a story from several years ago about a time when I was making a hamburger. But I did not have any hamburger buns. So, I used a personal sized frozen pizza in the shape of a square, cut that in half, and that became buns.

(Applause and cheers.)

Jesse Thorn: I think you just got elected mayor of Madison.

John Hodgman: I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision.

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: Jess, what's it like to be married to an insane genius?

Jess: You know, it's only been a year. It's gonna be a long life. Yeah.

John Hodgman: Jess, what is your—so, Jess, you looked at this, and you're like, “That's not only not hamburger buns, that's not even pizza. Because it's square.”

(Jess confirms.)

And what is your issue with non-circular pizza?

Jess: I personally feel that any pizza that is not in the shape of a circle is unworthy of the name of pizza.

John Hodgman: Wow! There are a lot of non-circle pizzas in life, you know.

Jess: Well, you know, you can avoid them pretty easily, I would say.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Okay, fair enough. Matt, what is a Detroit style pizza for those who do not know?

Matt: So, a Detroit style pizza is traditionally much thicker. It will have a thicker dough.

John Hodgman: It's a pan pizza.

Matt: It's a pan pizza, as they say. A thick layer of cheese on top.

(One single cheer from the audience followed by laughter.)

And the signature of the Detroit style is that—

John Hodgman: A little on the nose out there, Wisconsin.

(Laughter.)

Matt: The Detroit style is known for its crispy edges, where the cheese browns along the edge of the pan and sort of becomes one with the golden edge of the crust.

John Hodgman: And are those edges arcs or lines, sir? You know the answer. Why are you thinking about this?

Matt: They are lines.

John Hodgman: They are lines. Because it is a what shape pizza?

Matt: A square. Or a rectangle.

John Hodgman: A square. I'm having a difficulty picturing this. Do we have any evidence that we can bring forward? Some square, Detroit style, arguably pizza? Oh, look at that! It's beautiful.

Matt: I believe we do.

John Hodgman: Who made this pizza, Matt?

Matt: I did.

John Hodgman: Fantastic. Because you had some hamburgers lying around, and you needed some—

(Laughter.)

So, this looks like a beautiful—would you—? I know that the pizza that you're holding, Jess, fills you with complete disgust.

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And she actually kind of looks like she's gonna throw up. Angle it forward a little bit so the people at home can see. It's a beautiful looking Detroit style pizza.

(Cheers and applause.)

I'll take that off your hands. You can use that paper towel to disinfect yourself from this horrible contagion. Jesse, you want to take a square?

Jesse Thorn: *(Enthusiastically.)* Yeah, you bet I do!

John Hodgman: Yeah, I know. This looks really good. That is a thick Detroit pizza right there.

Jesse Thorn: Thick Detroit pizza for a thick San Francisco bailiff.

John Hodgman: It has pepperonis on it, is that right? And these pepperonis are also thick. Well done, double thick. Would you like a square? Yeah, take one. Jess, may I offer you a square?

Jess: I'd like to hold off until your verdict, if that would be alright.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Oh, that's true. Because if I rule this a pizza, then you might have to eat it. Okay.

(Laughter.)

I will—everyone loves eating on mic, so I'll even have a bite.

Jesse Thorn: This does remind me a little bit of what someone in line in front of me at the farmer's market here in Madison this morning called Fashasha bread.

(Laughter.)

Matt: It does have some similarities to a Fashasha or a Focaccia, as you might say.

John Hodgman: Matt, I'll hold on to that if you don't want to eat it on mic. It's really delicious though. I'll just get it closer to Jess for a minute.

(Laughter.)

Jess, if this isn't pizza, what is it?

Jess: It's too thick bread with some cheese and sauce and some toppings.

John Hodgman: Uh-huh. It's too thick bread with some cheese and sauce and some toppings. And the bread isn't baked when you put it in the pan. Right? The dough—it's dough, right?

Matt: The dough is raw when it goes in there.

John Hodgman: It's not like you're making a French bread pizza after school or something like that. This is a real dough that you made?

(Matt confirms.)

From scratch?

(Matt confirms.)

And that probably took some time and care.

(Matt confirms.)

And yet your wife wants nothing to do with it. I understand.

Matt: Unfortunately.

(Jess laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: My old friend Dan Grayson, who created the theme music for *The Sound of Young America* and helped us with this show, he calls it cheesy sauce bread. He says there's pizza and cheesy sauce bread.

John Hodgman: What do you think about that, Jess? Does that hold water?

Jess: That really rings true in my heart. Yeah, I like that definition.

John Hodgman: I see. What kind of pizza did you grow up with? Where did you grow up, and what's your pizza legacy?

Jess: Yeah, so, I grew up in the Chicago suburbs. There is no shortage—

John Hodgman: *(Sarcastically.)* Oh, very famous for its very thin pizzas. Very traditional thin—

Jess: Well, I do love deep dish. I love—you know, somebody “whooped” for the lots of cheese. I agree. Lots of cheese on pizza is great. But Chicago also has all kinds of tavern style, thin crust. And also, I don't know exactly the terminology for it, but what I—you know, like a normal pan pizza that's like circular, but like a medium thickness crust. And so, that

was the pizza I grew up on, all those three kinds. We had pizza a lot growing up. But I was never, ever exposed to non-circular styles of pizza until I got to college.

John Hodgman: And then what happened?

Jess: And then—

Jesse Thorn: And then the woke brigade marched in with their pizza diversity training!

(Laughter.)

Jess: You know, if only. If only. Somebody, you know, after a night out had ordered Jets Pizza.

(Scattered cheers.)

John Hodgman: Alright, a chain that I've—a local chain that I've never heard of.

Jess: A local chain that specializes in Detroit style cheesy bread with sauce. And this was, again, the first time I had ever even seen in person a pizza that was not circular. And to describe it, you know, it has a lot of the same characteristics theoretically as what you've described as Detroit style pizza, but the crust was like—I mean, it was like four inches thick. There was a layer of not olive oil or any good kind of grease, but like the really bad like bottom of the fryer restaurant grease, you know. And then not enough cheese and not enough sauce.

John Hodgman: Uh-huh. I don't see why that's really bad. Okay, okay.

Jess: It was just—it was terrible. It was a terrible introduction to non-circular pizza. And I have to say that I have in, you know, almost 20 years since never experienced a square pizza that was worth ever wanting to eat again.

John Hodgman: Wow! And you had never seen a square pizza until you went to college? What a sheltered life you lived.

Jess: I mean—*(laughs)*. I knew that they existed.

John Hodgman: Were you a part of a religious order of some kind?

Jess: I was not! I mean, I grew up Catholic, but yeah.

John Hodgman: You've heard of Sicilian pizza, right?

Jess: I've heard of Sicilian pizza.

John Hodgman: Yeah, there's some Catholics there.

Jess: Right. *(Laughs.)* That is true. I knew that they existed. I had never been expected to eat it before in my life. And I was soundly disappointed.

John Hodgman: When was the first time, Matt, that you tried to make Detroit style pizza for Jess?

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Matt: So, this conversation actually took place before I had considered making Detroit style pizza for Jess.

John Hodgman: Oh! You took it as a dare!

(Laughter.)

Matt: I'll be very honest. Yes, that's part of it.

John Hodgman: Okay. Because in my notes here, I'm told like, oh, you have a very deep connection to Detroit style pizza. It goes back in your history. You want to reconnect with that history. But mostly you just want to make your wife annoyed. You took it as a marriage-night dare, and you were gonna show her. You got up out of bed immediately, and started searching for recipes. "Thickest possible square pizza."

Jesse Thorn: This is less a Detroit style pizza, more of an "F me? F you!" style pizza.

(Laughter.)

Matt: So, I am originally from a suburb of Detroit. And some of my earliest pizza memories are of square, thick pizzas, like we demonstrated. And I love making pizza. I love cooking. I love cooking for my wife.

(A hoot and scattered applause from the audience.)

And I would love to expand my repertoire and bring that style of pizza into our rotation at home.

John Hodgman: But you make other kinds of pizza as well, right?

(He confirms.)

Do you make round style?

Matt: I make that style as well.

John Hodgman: Mm-hm. In a pan or—? We have one of those, right? Let's take a look at the round style. *(Beat.)* Oh, that's a beautiful round pizza that everyone would agree is pizza!

(Applause.)

Matt: Thank you.

John Hodgman: Yeah, Jess is not only happy to hold it, but is reaching for it. And she's going to eat some. Loudly on microphone, I trust. What do we have on this one? It looks like some olives and some...

Matt: This one is apple, dates, goat cheese—

John Hodgman: *(Interrupting.)* Never mind.

(Laughter.)

Jess, give that back. Spit it out, please. Spit it out. Thank you. Wow. Let's go back to the hamburger with pizza bun. Is he okay, Jess? Apple and figs. Well, that's a thing. People do that, I suppose.

Jesse Thorn: Your objection is too much bread. Meanwhile... dot, dot, dot.

John Hodgman: Yeah, exactly. Jess, let me ask you—we'll do a quick quiz. Or you know, give me your opinion on what is or is not pizza. And if you agree with Jess, applaud. And if you disagree with Jess, boo. We've talked about some of these already. Sicilian style pizza.

Jess: No.

John Hodgman: Wow.

(Boos from the crowd.)

Chicago deep dish pizza.

Jess: Yes.

(Raucous cheers and applause but with scattered boos.)

John Hodgman: Wow. Some disagree. Controversial. Controversial. In Chicago, they won't let a pizza alone. Like, they just won't let it just be pizza. They're cooking pizza in bowls. Anyway. Chicago, you mentioned it. Chicago tavern cut pizza.

Jess: Yes.

(Cheers and applause.)

John Hodgman: Aha! And yet, when it is tavern cut, what is the shape of the piece?

Jess: It's square.

John Hodgman: Yes! What does it become then? Non-pizza?

Jess: It started as a circle. If it originated as a circle, and it's cut into squares, or trapezoids, whatever you like—totally fine.

John Hodgman: Sure. New Haven style white clam pizza.

Jess: What shape is it?

John Hodgman: Oblong. No right angles. Clams.

Jess: I'll allow it.

John Hodgman: Oh-ho! Thank you.

(Mostly boos with scattered applause.)

Wow! You don't know who you're dealing with, do you? White clam pizza is the best pizza. That's a fact. That's what they teach in the Protestant religion.

(Laughter.)

I'm also a Catholic. Pizza on a bagel.

Jess: No!

John Hodgman: But you can have it any time!

(Boos.)

Jess: You should have used that for your hamburger.

Matt: *(Beat.)* I do.

John Hodgman: Don't! If you put your hamburger on a bagel, not only is it not a sandwich, it's not a hamburger. That's just—that's true.

So, Matt, you grew up in suburban Detroit. You claim to have some deep connection to this pizza. But you like round pizza too. Why don't you just make round pizza for your wonderful bride?

Matt: I do make round pizza for my bride.

John Hodgman: Yeah, but why do you try to force the square pizza on her?

Matt: Because I think it has qualities to offer that a circular pizza doesn't have.

John Hodgman: Go on. The shape is one. That's free.

Matt: The shape, the bubbly cheesiness, that crisps up around the edges, the crispy dough, the tall sides. It's just a different experience than the circular pizza.

[00:20:00]

John Hodgman: And you have fun making it?

Matt: I had tremendous fun making it.

John Hodgman: Jess, if I were to rule in your favor, it says here you'd like me to order that Matt is free to make and eat what he wants, but Detroit style cannot be the only pizza option offered. In other words, one square, one round.

Jess: Yes, please.

John Hodgman: That seems eminently fair. What's wrong with that, Matt?

Matt: This is the first I'm hearing of that!

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Okay, Matt, if I were to rule in your favor, it says that I should rule that you should be able to make Detroit style pizza, serve it for dinner, and that Jess has to acknowledge that it is pizza.

Matt: I request that she be—that she allow it to be made in the house. Ideally, she would consume it. But yes, I would like to be allowed to make non-circular pizzas in my own home.

John Hodgman: Well, she's saying you can, you just have to keep it to yourself. Do you know what I mean? It's like a side deal that you have with yourself. Personal care, we call it, in Chicago.

(Jess erupts with laughter.)

Matt: I could consider that as a compromise, but I think the work of making two kinds of pizza is maybe a little bit unreasonable.

John Hodgman: Jess, any closing arguments?

Jess: I would say if this was about a topping, like a mushroom or something—

John Hodgman: What's your favorite topping for pizza?

Jess: Oh, pepperoni. Which is why he put the pepperoni on the Detroit style pizza. *(Laughs.)*
Tried to trick me.

John Hodgman: That's why he made that gross round pizza and put pepperonis on the square one?! To try to sway you? Oh, Matt.

Jesse Thorn: Matt, what's your favorite topping? Quince?

(Laughter.)

Matt: Lately I like Italian sausage and giardiniera.

John Hodgman: Oh, very Chicago! That's pretty good.

Jesse Thorn: Jess, I have a question for you. Matt said he loves to cook. Is he the kind of cooking husband who cooks most of the food in the house? Or is he the kind of cooking husband who likes to do elaborate cooking projects once a month and then provide them with great aplomb, and also they're always either pizza or barbecue?

(Laughter.)

Jess: He is the former. He is the person doing most of the cooking in the household, which I deeply, deeply appreciate, and I make that clear all the time—especially when he makes delicious circular pizzas.

(Laughter.)

I am more the one that will do the elaborate once a month, every dish in the kitchen, and then it's either pizza or barbecue. Yeah. *(Chuckles.)*

John Hodgman: I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I will retire to my chambers. I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

Jesse Thorn: Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the court room.

(Applause.)

Matt, how are you feeling about your chances in this case?

Matt: I feel pretty good. I think I've presented a solid case. And I trust that whatever the judge decides will be reasonable and fair.

Jesse Thorn: Jess, did you think that by offering to eat 50% square pizza you could duck the issue of whether square pizza is actually itself pizza?

Jess: I'm too stubborn for that. I did not think that. *(Laughs.)*

Jesse Thorn: How do you feel about your chances?

Jess: I feel that my chances are dwindling as time goes on.

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughs.)* Well, let's be honest, all of our chances are dwindling as time goes on.

(Laughter.)

It's just something we have to come to terms with. You can talk to your priest about it. We'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about this when we come back in just a moment.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Please rise as Judge John Hodgman reenters the courtroom and presents his verdict.

(Applause.)

John Hodgman: First of all, I have to commend Matt for his ingenuity in putting a burger on two pieces of frozen pizza. That's neither pizza, nor a hamburger, nor a sandwich. It's an entirely new thing that you should be selling out of a truck somewhere. And then you'll be celebrating your second anniversary with Guy Fieri.

(Laughter.)

When I was young, I had an entrepreneurial spirit myself. I decided that I was going to sell English muffin pizzas out of the first-floor window of our home in suburban Brookline, Massachusetts. I came to this decision because I had noticed in the refrigerator we had English muffins, tomato sauce, and mozzarella cheese, and so therefore my costs were zero. This was going to be a pure profit operation for me. I was going to rake it in, and I would become famous in the neighborhood, the only thing I cared about. I didn't care about pizza.

[00:25:00]

I would become famous in the neighborhood for being the kid who sells English muffin pizzas out of the first-floor window of his parents' home. We put up posters all around. It was a very good price point, 25 cents. I was making the English muffin pizzas in the toaster oven. I could barely keep up with supply, because people were walking across our lawn to our patio and ordering the pizzas. And I started to realize as I was selling them like, well, hotcakes—which probably I should have sold—that none of these people were strangers to me. They were all friends of my parents.

(Scattered “aw”s.)

And slowly it dawned on me that these were not just citizens of Brookline walking around going, “Mm! 25 cents for an English muffin pizza, good deal. I'll walk across private property to get it.” These are people who were sent to my house by my parents to buy the pizza. And that's when I realized there is such a thing as a dishonest day's work. I was a nepo baby English muffin pizza magnate. I felt truly ashamed of myself. And only then did I realize this isn't pizza at all! There are things that are not pizza. And I would agree that focaccia is not pizza.

Jesse Thorn: Fashasha.

John Hodgman: I forgot how they say it in Wisconsin. Beyond Wisconsin style focaccia, there is also Altuna pizza, which is in Altuna, Pennsylvania, which is square pizza with American cheese on it.

(Boos from the audience.)

There is St. Louis style pizza.

(Cheers.)

Okay. Which—

Jesse Thorn: The entire Provel family is in the house.

John Hodgman: *(Chuckling.)* Yeah. Which is essentially a saltine cracker with Provel processed cheese on it, an acquired taste.

Are these things pizza, even though they are an affront to the senses? That is the question. And I have to say, yes—as long as it is a flatbread that you are cooking with sauce and toppings on it. As long as it is served in a bar, as long as it is shared—in a college dorm room, for example, or after hours in a tavern. As long as it fits most—and especially if it has clams on it—it's a delicious pizza! Pizza is a state of mind as much as it is a food way, and that state of mind is usually high or drunk.

(Laughter and scattered applause.)

Now, this is a four o'clock in the afternoon show. I am dead sober. Well, what time is it actually? How far after 4 is it?

Jess: 4:40.

John Hodgman: 4:40. Okay. I am dead sober, and yet I still enjoy this very, very thick and fluffy Detroit style pizza that you made, Matt. I will not stop you from eating it. I will not stop you from enjoying it. I will not stop you from making it. I will not stop you from calling it pizza. But in the interest of your marriage and such that it goes on for a long time, keep it away from your wife.

(Laughter.)

It's really not her thing. It's really not her thing. You should make it for yourself, make it for your friends who come over and not try to force it on her. Because after all, it's settled law in this court that people like what they like. Keep this away from your wife. This is personal for you. One thing about a marriage, and I've been in one for a long time, is that you have to maintain separate lives, as well as the lives that you have entwined together. Your separate interests, your hobbies, and your pursuits and so forth. This is one of them. That said, of course it's *(censor beep)*ing pizza.

(Laughter and applause.)

It's Detroit style pizza. This is the sound of a gavel. *(Bangs his gavel.)* Judge John Hodgman rules, that is all.

Jesse Thorn: Matt, Jess, thank you for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Judge John Hodgman, we're taking a quick break from the case. You've got Solid Sound coming right up, right?

John Hodgman: That's right! June 28th through the 30th. It's the Solid Sound Festival in North Adams, Massachusetts. It's Wilco, the band's, every other year festival of music, arts, and delights. The best music festival that you can find in a former electronic parts factory in Western Massachusetts. It's a total delight. And not only are you going to get to see Wilco play two nights in a row, and not only are you going to get to see incredible musicians like Nick Lowe and Young Fresh Fellows, the band Wednesday, all of your various Wilco side projects, but an incredible comedy stage, cohosted by me and your friend, Jean Grae.

[00:30:00]

Featuring the comedic stylings of Dave Hill, Todd Barry, Sidnee Washington, Brittany Carney, and an incredible native of Massachusetts—semi-native of Massachusetts himself, Eugene Mirman. All there, Solid Sound Festival. Go to SolidSoundFestival.com for tickets to the whole thing or a single day ticket or whatever you wanna do. It would be so much fun to see *Judge John Hodgman* listeners there. And I totally guarantee that you will see Monte Belmonte around there too, because he is a big part of the festival as well. Jesse, what do you have going on?

Jesse Thorn: I have some really great guests on *Bullseye*. A lot of *Judge John Hodgman* listeners probably already know that I host the NPR show *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*. It's a long form interview show with people from the world of arts and culture. This week, I have Zucker-Abrahams-Zucker, the directors and writers of the *Airplane!*, of the *Naked Gun* movies, of *Police Squad*, of *Top Secret!*, some of the *Scary Movies*, some of the like literal funniest things that have ever existed in show business. They are the sweetest, most hilarious dudes. John, you know, they built themselves a theater in Madison, Wisconsin, to start their careers. Then when they moved to LA, they took it apart, put it in a truck, drove it to LA, and rebuilt it in a rehab center.

(John “woah!”s.)

Yeah, like a halfway house. And then they named their show that they performed there *My Nose*. And the reason is that they knew that if they named it *My Nose*, the theater listing in the *Los Angeles Times* would say, “*My Nose* runs continuously.”

John Hodgman: Nice. (Laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: Also, one of them had a license plate—and he drove a Chevy, and he had a license plate that said “BOBS-MG”. And then people would drive up next to him and, you know, shout to him, “Hey, that's not an MG.”

And he'd say, “I'm not Bob!” Then he'd peel out.

(They laugh.)

Anyway, they're so funny. And then next week on the show, oh man, just two of my all-time favorites. The absolute incredible genius Miranda July, who has a beautiful and hilarious novel. I feel like being super funny is an underrated part of Miranda July's oeuvre. But the artist, novelist, filmmaker, Miranda July, who has a hilarious novel coming out called *All Fours*. And then one of my favorite pals in all of comedy, like a total friend hero level one, Tig Notaro. Who is just—oh, just Tig, just owns. And it's a really good, deep conversation with both of those brilliant artists. So, yeah, go subscribe to *Bullseye*, and don't miss these great episodes, please. We could use all the listeners that we can get. And if you listen to them and you like them, please recommend them to somebody!

John Hodgman: You know what I say about Tig Notaro?

Jesse Thorn: What's that?

John Hodgman: Tip top. Tip top Tig.

Jesse Thorn: Tig Rules. Tig is the best. Anytime you're thinking a good thought about Tig Notaro and you're like, "Uuum, you shouldn't meet your heroes" or like, "Oh, she'll only disappoint me" or whatever. Nah. Tig rules.

(John agrees.)

Yeah, no reservations. okay. Let's get back to the show.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: Jesse Thorn, I believe we have another case to hear, right?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I—we do. I do have a question though.

John Hodgman: What's that?

Jesse Thorn: I can't help but notice that next to our pizza—which makes perfect sense to have pizza on stage during a podcast recording.

John Hodgman: Obviously.

Jesse Thorn: Why is there a mailbox here?

John Hodgman: Oh, you know, I don't know. This was here when we came in. I presume it's part of the theater thing, maybe a union thing. I asked if we could move it. They said, no, they couldn't.

(Laughter and applause.)

And so, I just said, okay, we'll just have the mailbox on stage. 'Cause I don't know why there would be a mailbox on stage.

Jesse Thorn: Wait a minute. Hold on a minute. I'd recognize those Minions shorts anywhere, Judge Hodgman.

John Hodgman: What—what are you doing? Checking your mail? What? Is that Rob Thomas from the *Capital Times*?! Come on down!

Jesse Thorn: It's Rob Thomas from the *Capital Times*.

(Applause.)

We invited Rob on the show, and we asked him, "Did you bring your Minion shorts?"

And he said, “I brought a number of options.”

Rob Thomas: Yeah, we went Minion shorts. Hello Madison!

(Applause.)

John Hodgman: So, Rob writes features for the *Capital Times*. Wrote a very nice article about us in the newspaper, which was very kind of you. Also, we mentioned that we ruled against you with extreme prejudice earlier in the podcast, and here you are again. And you're still wearing those Minion shorts.

[00:35:00]

Do you still go out and wear them even though I told you not to?

Rob Thomas: Uh, no, that's why I get my mail delivered here, because I'm not allowed to go out to the mailbox at home!

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: And is there such a thing as Madison pizza or Wisconsin style pizza?

Rob Thomas: So, whatever that thing Matt made, that was the turducken pizza burger—like, that is—I almost missed my cue, because I've been thinking about that thing the whole time. My second choice would be probably the mac and cheese pizza at Ian's Pizza.

(Cheers.)

John Hodgman: Mac and cheese pizza.

Rob Thomas: No sauce, just like cheese and bread and cheese and—you know.

John Hodgman: And mac, at some point, I hope.

Rob Thomas: And mac, yeah. So

Jesse Thorn: Wait, there's no sauce on the mac and cheese pizza?

Rob Thomas: I don't think so.

Jesse Thorn: And there's layers upon layers?

Rob Thomas: No, it's just a lot of it. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Okay. I love it. You know what I was thinking about Chicago style pizza, the deep dish pizza? I was thinking it is proof that in the Midwest, anything can be turned into a casserole.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: That's true. That's true. You have a favorite casserole, Rob? Do you put—do people put tater tots on top of casserole here or no?

(Cheers and applause.)

Rob Thomas: Oh, hell yeah—heck yeah. Absolutely, yeah.

John Hodgman: It's okay. You can say “hell yeah” in front of the child.

Rob Thomas: *(Chuckling.)* Is that right?

John Hodgman: Yeah, he just went to the bar.

(Laughter.)

How'd it go? Thumbs up, says the child. Yeah. That's an important thing to remember, right? Always tip your bartenders.

Rob Thomas: And start planting those seeds early for 2025, 2035.

Jesse Thorn: Always tip your bartenders, always tater tot your casserole.

John Hodgman: So, we do have another case to hear, right?

(Jesse confirms.)

And that means I'm going to have to go back to my chambers, I'm afraid.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I think it is.

John Hodgman: But Rob, will you stick around and weigh in with some Madison style wisdom?

Rob Thomas: I would love to judge other people's choices right now.

John Hodgman: Wonderful. You deserve to. Thank you. I'll go away now.

Jesse Thorn: Please welcome to the stage Joe and Allison.

(Cheers and applause.)

Jesse Thorn: Our case, “Badgering the Witness”. Joe brings the case against his friend Allison. Joe claims to live on the eastside of Madison.

(Cheers.)

But whenever he mentions this, Allison tells him and everyone listening that he's wrong. She says he lives on the north side.

(A combination of cheers and boos.)

Who's right? Who's wrong? *(Laughs.)* This is the most emotionally intense response we've ever gotten to—

Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide. Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and delivers an obscure cultural reference.

(Applause.)

John Hodgman: *(Singing in a Tom Waits impersonation.)* Well, the smart money's all on Harlow, and the moon is in the street, and the shadow boys are breaking all the laws. And you're east of eastside Madison, and the wind is making speeches, and the rain sounds like a round of applause. *(Beat.)* And Napoleon is weeping in a carnival saloon.

Jesse Thorn: *(Flatly.)* Wow. See, there's always a second part!

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: His invisible fiancé's in the mirror, and the band is going home. It's raining hammers, it's raining nails. It's true, there's nothing left for him down here. And it's tiiiime! Tiiime! Time! And it's time, time, time!

Jesse Thorn: Don't touch me in these circumstances!

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: It's time, time, time that you love. And it's time, time, time.

Jesse Thorn: *(Chuckling.)* This goes and goes.

John Hodgman: Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear them in.

(Applause.)

Jesse Thorn: What do you think Tom Waits ate when he was 17 that caused this?

John Hodgman: (*Clinging to his Tom Waits impression.*) I think he probably took \$20 to the bar and said, “I’ll see you in 12 years.”

Jesse Thorn: Joe, Allison, please rise, raise your right hands. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God-or-Whatever?

(*They swear.*)

Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that it will probably only encourage him to do that in every other city on our entire tour?

(*They swear.*)

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

John Hodgman: It's truly one of my favorite songs, and I did not do it justice. But in any case—Joe and Allison, you may be seated for an immediate summary judgment in one of yours favors. Can either of you name the piece of culture that I referenced as I entered the courtroom? It's probably going to be pretty easy. Allison, you guess first.

Allison: Okay, I'm going to guess a Tom Waits cover of the second verse of the theme song to *The Jeffersons*.

[00:40:00]

(*Laughter and scattered applause.*)

John Hodgman: I'm really searching hard for the lyrics to that song.

Rob Thomas: (*Singing in a Tom Waits impression.*) “Moving on up to the eastside.”

John Hodgman: (*Committing hard to the Tom Waits impression.*) “To the east siiiide! To a deluxe spot—”

(*Speaking.*) But that's the chorus, not the verse. I was trying to think of the verses.

Jesse Thorn: I think Joe might get this one, because he stole Tom Waits's hat.

John Hodgman: Yeah, Joe's wearing a little porkpie hat. Can you guess?

Joe: If it was the last one, I would have known, because that song was on my daughter's like bedtime playlist. But—

John Hodgman: Really?

(Joe confirms.)

So, you know—

Jesse Thorn: What are you trying to do to her?!

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Your daughter's bedtime playlist?

Joe: Since birth, yeah.

John Hodgman: Oh, wowie-zowie! Okay.

Jesse Thorn: You were concerned she'd grow up to live somewhere other than a flop house?

(Laughter.)

Joe: She loves low growly voices. Yeah. Of course. So, I'm going to take another song from our playlist that I'm sure you've previewed. So, I'm going to say Bob Dylan, “Froggy Went a Courtin’.”

John Hodgman: Bob Dylan, “Froggy Went a Courtin’.”

Joe: Yeah.

John Hodgman: Remember how we were saying they're all Tom Waits songs on the tour?

(Laughter.)

You want to give another guess, or is that—? Alright, it's fine. All guesses are wrong. Guess what it was called? “Time”. “Time” by Tom Waits on the *Rain Dogs* album, my favorite Tom Waits song. And I mean it, Jesse. But alas, now we must hear your case. So, who seeks justice in my fake court?

Joe: I do.

John Hodgman: And you, are Joe, is that right?

(Joe confirms.)

Now, Joe, you say that you live in east Madison.

Joe: Actually I say I live on the eastside.

John Hodgman: On the eastside. You know what? I don't care.

(Laughter.)

Because I want to know about your Mitsubishi Delica. Because I heard a little rumor—you know, this is called the Van Freaks Roadshow. We named the tour after our, Jesse and my, mutual love for the *Antiques Roadshow* and the Mitsubishi Delica Japanese Market Only Adventure Van, which is a very cool car. And I heard it on fairly good authority that you have one, and you may have driven it here.

Joe: Yeah, it's sitting out back.

John Hodgman: It's sitting out back. Do we have a photo of it? *(Beat.)* Oh, woow.

(Cheers and applause.)

So Allison, obviously I'm incredibly biased to Joe. He's got Tom waits on his daughter's playlist, even though your guess and joke was really, really good. He brought a Delica to the show. He brought a Delica to the podcast fight. Right? That's pretty heavy duty. Why is he wrong? You've got to really convince me. Why is he wrong when he says he's from the eastside of Madison?

Allison: Because he's from the north side of Madison. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: What's the difference? What are we talking about? What makes Joe's neighborhood northside rather than eastside?

Allison: So, as you stated earlier, Madison is an isthmus. Yes, we have a lake to the North, a lake to the South, and Central Madison is right in between.

John Hodgman: Yes, let's take a look at a map, for those of you who may not live here. That's a really nice map. That's a cool isthmus. I can really see the two lakes there.

Allison: Yes, and if you notice the red dot to the northern part of the map, that would be where Joe's house is.

John Hodgman: Oh, good. Let's dox him.

(Laughter.)

Can we get cross streets up there?

Allison: Yes. I made an inset that shows one block from his house is North Street.

John Hodgman: Oh! Is that the traditional debarkation line of North side?

Allison: No, I mean—so, to give a little description, Madison is an isthmus. Like I said. It is bisected by Washington Avenue. And once you are out of Central Madison, if you are north of Washington Avenue, you live on the north side.

(Boos and scattered cheers.)

John Hodgman: Rob, obviously there's a lot of (inaudible) here around this. What am I missing? What is the cultural context of north side versus eastside?

Rob Thomas: This is the most Madison case I've ever heard of in my entire life.

(Laughter.)

In Madison, you can drive ten minutes to another part of town, and yet people are so tribal about whether they're from the north side or from the eastside. And don't get me started on the west siders.

(Scattered cheers and boos.)

So, it is very important for you to know where you're from and where—you know.

John Hodgman: What is the connotation of the eastside? Is that a cool neighborhood? Is that a—?

Rob Thomas: eastside—

John Hodgman: Like, is it the kind of place where like guys would have beards and glasses and cool little hats and little, short sleeved shirts and they put Tom Waits on their daughter's playlist kind of place?

Rob Thomas: Eeeh, that's more northside, I think.

John Hodgman: Ohhh! Interesting!

Rob Thomas: eastside is more—if you find an aging hippie in Madison, he has an eastside address, for sure.

[00:45:00]

John Hodgman: Oh, alright. Interesting. How do you—Allison, does that describe it, would you say?

Allison: Well, I feel like the eastside does have a reputation for being progressive. It's kind of the hip area, I would say.

John Hodgman: Mm-hm. And what does the northside have a reputation for?

Allison: I love the northside. I don't know if the northside has an—

John Hodgman: As long as Joe stays there, you love the northside.

Allison: Yeah! The northside is lucky to have Joe. Joe is a wonderful human being who lives on the northside. They are lucky to have him. The northside is up and coming. It's great. It has a lot of new restaurants. It's lovely!

John Hodgman: Come on. You're trying to consign him to this place.

(Allison agrees with a giggle.)

Why is it important that Joe recognize he's not on the eastside? Does northside have a character of its own, aside from up and coming and lovely and the place where Joe lives?

Allison: Joe, do you want to share?

John Hodgman: Joe, tell me why it's important to you, at least theoretically, to live on the eastside.

Joe: I mean, the name of my neighborhood is Emerson East.

(Cheers.)

So, I mean, I just go by what I'm told my neighborhood is. So, it's a vibe for sure.

John Hodgman: Okay, go on, tell me about the vibe.

Joe: Yeah, it's a vibe. Lots of dogs. Neighborhood cats. Um.

Jesse Thorn: So, just the presence of pets.

Joe: But a lot of pets. Excessive amount of pets.

John Hodgman: Would you agree that—Allison, where do you live?

Allison: On the near eastside.

Jesse Thorn: Hold on, John. I gotta dive into this pet thing.

John Hodgman: Okay. I'll eat a pepperoni.

Jesse Thorn: I gotta tell you, Joe, a lot of dogs, a lot of cats is not a vibe. A vibe is a lot of iguanas on guys' shoulders.

John Hodgman: Now, you just said that you were on the near eastside, and some people went bananas. How many eastsides are there? There's the near eastside. There's the far eastside. There's the sub eastside.

Allison: No, no, no.

John Hodgman: There's the little eastside. No?

Allison: You got near east, and you got east.

John Hodgman: You got near east, and you got east. What's the difference between those two?

Allison: Near east is still really on isthmus proper, so closer to downtown.

John Hodgman: Both of these neighborhoods are off isthmus.

Allison: Oh no, I'm on the isthmus.

John Hodgman: You're on the isthmus, because near east—I can't say this word anymore because I just ate a piece of pizza by accident.

(Laughter.)

Allison: I'm just ten blocks away from where we are now.

John Hodgman: You're just ten—? Okay, where are we now?

Allison: We're central. We're right downtown.

John Hodgman: Central, okay, got it. Joe, you mentioned that there are cats and dogs where you live, thus making it the eastside.

(Laughter.)

Joe: There's more. There's more. I can give you more.

John Hodgman: I do believe that we have some pet related evidence that was sent in just for funsies.

Jesse Thorn: Hold up. For real?

John Hodgman: Yes. For real. You may have to get to the foot of the stage to be able to see it properly. Tell us about the pet we are about to see.

Allison: This is my cat, Roger, who lives on the near eastside with me.

John Hodgman: Oh, you're—

(Jesse wails into a laugh and the audience joins him.)

Jesse Thorn: *(Screaming desperately from the audience.)* Ask them what he's doing! Ask them what he's doing!

John Hodgman: Jesse Thorn is now sitting in the front row laughing his face off, and he wants to know: what is Roger doing?

Allison: Chilling on the near eastside!

John Hodgman: Chilling on the near eastside. *(Chuckles.)* Come back, I need my bailiff back. And this is more evidence that you live on the Near eastside, 'cause obviously cats live there.

Jesse Thorn: I love you, funny cat! *(Cackles.)*

John Hodgman: Jesse, I hate to say it, but I think we need to advance the slide, or else we won't be able to pay attention to anything else.

Jesse Thorn: John, did you see?! He's going like, "Wrrr!"

John Hodgman: He's just chilling on the near east! You know! You know how Roger does it.

Jesse Thorn: Okay, I'm gonna advance the slide.

John Hodgman: Joe, do you have a dog or a cat?

Joe: I do.

John Hodgman: Oh, okay.

Joe: Yeah, I have a cat.

John Hodgman: Where's the photo? *(Beat.)* Forget it! That's a real north side move, Joe!

(Laughter.)

If you were eastside, you would totally be sending in a slide five weeks in advance, like Allison did. Good job, Allison. Allison, who's lived in Madison longer, you or Joe?

Allison: I have.

John Hodgman: You have! By how long?

Allison: I have lived here since 2001.

John Hodgman: Oh! That's very good. And Joe, are you a native Madisonian?

Joe: No.

John Hodgman: No. When did you move here?

Joe: I moved here in 2012.

John Hodgman: Oh, okay. Still a long time, but still pretty northside-come-lately, I would say.

(Laughter.)

When I keep calling you northside Joe, how does that make you feel?

Joe: It infuriates me.

John Hodgman: Go on. Search those feelings.

[00:50:00]

I still don't understand why any of this matters. I mean, I understand that neighborhoods matter, but I don't understand the context of the neighborhood.

Joe: So, only in the eastside, when after I raked all my leaves to the front yard, would my neighbor take my leaves from my front yard and dump them in their own backyard. That is an eastside move.

(Laughter and applause.)

John Hodgman: And you're saying that's happening up there on East North Street or wherever you live.

Joe: Yes, yes.

John Hodgman: Alright. What do you—

Jesse Thorn: Wait, what does that mean?! (*Inaudible.*)

John Hodgman: Forget it, Jesse. It's a north side thing. Right?

Jesse Thorn: Why are people stealing leaves?! What kind of weird set tripping is going on in Madison, Wisconsin, that involves leaf theft?

John Hodgman: Mulch is the answer from the crowd. We're gonna have a good time in Mob Justice, I can tell.

(*Laughter.*)

Let the record show, some people in the crowd yelled, “Mulch.” Is that the answer?

(*Joe confirms.*)

They want that sweet mulch. No mulch is better than the northside mulch. I'm sorry I'm making you so mad, Joe.

Joe: Your honor, please.

John Hodgman: You are friends, correct? Colleagues, friends, pals?

Allison: Very good friends.

John Hodgman: Very good friends.

Joe: For a long time.

John Hodgman: Yet the spite persistence. What do your mutual friends say about Joe's claim to eastside-dom? Joe? I know what you're gonna say, Allison.

Joe: I mean, we could ask Allison's boyfriend.

John Hodgman: Alright. Allison's boyfriend! No, we don't have him here.

(*Laughter.*)

What would Allison's boyfriend say about it, Joe?

Joe: I mean, in many of our chats, he has said, “Yeah, Joe clearly lives on the eastside.”

John Hodgman: And any other friends? I mean, but you know, obviously Allison's boyfriend is—

Audience Member: (*Shouting.*) Joe lives on the northside!

John Hodgman: Who's that?

Allison: That would be my friend, Jory.

John Hodgman: Jory, okay. (*Chuckles.*) Joe, did you bring any people to support you?

Joe: Yes, that little one with the glasses, right there.

John Hodgman: Little one with the glasses? And this human being has a name?

Joe: Scout.

John Hodgman: Scout.

Joe: Yes.

John Hodgman: Scout, can you raise your hand just so I can see? Okay. Oh, Scout, I have a feeling that you're also biased. Scout, let me just ask you a question. Do you have Tom Waits on your playlist? (*Beat.*) Yes. Okay.

Jesse Thorn: Scout, did Joe tell you there's gonna be a rumble later?

(*Laughter.*)

John Hodgman: Yeah, it's a real *Northside Story*. Yeah.

(*Laughter and scattered applause.*)

Tom Waits does a cover of “There's a Place for Us”, which is great. It goes like this, (*in his impersonation*) There's a place for us SOMEWHEEEERE, a place for us!

Jesse Thorn: Nope! Nope, nope! Don't sing it! Nope! Nope, nope, nope, nope, nope. Nope, nope, nope, nope.

John Hodgman: Peace and quiet awaiting there!

Jesse Thorn: I gotta ride in a minivan with this guy.

John Hodgman: Yeah, that's right. We're gonna get out in that Delica later, and I'm gonna sing some sweet songs to you. Joe, what do you have against the northside? Why can't you just say I live in the northside?

Joe: I don't have anything against the northside. I just don't go there.

John Hodgman: Okay, Rob, help me out here. Is there—is this a clearcut case or not? You heard the streets they're talking about. East Northwest Avenue, Southeast Near East Boulevard or whatever. I don't get it.

Rob Thomas: I mean, this is clearly to me a cultural dispute masquerading as a geographical dispute.

Jesse Thorn: Describe the cultural difference. What are the cultural stakes?

Rob Thomas: (*Chuckles.*) Well, the eastside would be sort of a progressive hippie culture.

John Hodgman: And historically progressive. In fact, that's where it happened.

Rob Thomas: Yeah, it was like the—yes, right. And then the—

Jesse Thorn: A sort of mulching community.

Rob Thomas: Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's right. It's a mulch-forward community.

(*Laughter.*)

While the west side was like where all the university professors were. So, also progressive, but much more money over there.

John Hodgman: Sure, right. Brandenburg Concerto Liberals.

Rob Thomas: There you go. Yeah. And then the northside is a fairly new—I mean the Oscar Mayer plants, the former Oscar Mayer plant. So, it's a very working-class neighborhood, because—

John Hodgman: Right. 'Cause Oscar Mayer was headquartered here for more than 50 years, making non sandwich hot dogs. Famously.

Rob Thomas: Let's not start. Okay. (*Laughs.*)

John Hodgman: Woah, you want to take—you have beef with my hotdog?

Rob Thomas: No, no, no. For your sake, I didn't want to get pulled into that.

John Hodgman: Oh no, I can take care of myself. I'm from Park Slope. You know I can take care of myself.

(Laughter.)

Rob Thomas: Is that east or west Park Slope?

John Hodgman: South Slope. Yeah. The real Slope.

Rob Thomas: And then, yeah, north is now becoming kind of the hip, cool, new neighborhood with lots of new great restaurants. North Street is a great place.

John Hodgman: It sounds like exactly the kind of place a wonderful poser like Joe would want to live.

(Laughter.)

Why do you think he's reaching over to the eastside?

Rob Thomas: I don't know! That's what surprises me.

[00:55:00]

John Hodgman: Do you think, based on Joe's home's position on the map—which we revealed to the entire audience—that he is empirically in one neighborhood or the other? Or is he in a twilight zone between them?

Rob Thomas: I think he's in the DMZ between north and east. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Joe, why is this important to you? Why do you care so much about which neighborhood you live in? Because I get the feeling it's not just geography.

Joe: No. I mean, for example, there's a co-op, Willie Street North. And Willie Street East. I go to the eastside Willie Street co-op, because—

John Hodgman: *(Interrupting.)* Yes, I understand that you have all kinds of arguments for why you live in the eastside. My bailiff asked the probing question, “Why do you care?”

Joe: So, that way people know where I'm from!

Jesse Thorn: Why do you want people to know where you're from?

Joe: Because they ask! And they say, “Where are you from?”

Jesse Thorn: ‘Cause I’ll tell you this, right? There’s a great Vince Staples song called “Norf Norf”. It’s about how he’s from north Long Beach. Now when he says he’s from north Long Beach, he’s not just trying to do geographic clarification. There is deep emotional meaning to the fact that he is from north Long Beach. And if someone suggested that he was from the city of commerce, not all that far away, he’d be pretty upset. So, why is it that you want to be so clear about this? And it’s not—you can’t tell me that it’s so that people don’t get lost on the way to your house or whatever.

Joe: (*Laughs.*) No, I mean, the leaves were just an example, but there’s chickens, there’s just all sorts of like eastside things.

John Hodgman: That’s the answer, Jesse. There’s chickens. There’s eastside things like chickens and cats and dogs. Let’s try this another angle, Jesse.

(*Jesse agrees.*)

Allison, why is it—you’re friends with Joe. Good friends. You like him.

(*Allison confirms.*)

Why is it so important for you to keep him out of your precious eastside and to gatekeep this neighborhood so hard?

Allison: Maybe because it ticks him off when I say he’s from the north side?

(*Laughter and applause.*)

John Hodgman: Aaaah! Maybe because it annoys him. Is the eastside moving? Is it like pizza? A state of mind?

Allison: Yes.

John Hodgman: Yes, it is. It is. Is it creeping to the northside? Is the eastside ethos creeping to the north?

(*Allison confirms.*)

And is Joe taking that with him and destroying what was the northside and replacing it with Joe? And the east?

Allison: No, I said the north side is lucky to have Joe, and I believe that.

John Hodgman: Mm! Alright, Madisonians. This is not going to affect my decision, but you have been trying to yell your opinions at me for a while.

(Laughter.)

We're going to do this by yelling, thank you.

Those of you—don't do it yet! I'm going to point at you. If you believe that Joe lives on the eastside, yell “east” when I point at you.

(A hearty collective shout of “EAST” from the audience.)

Well done. If you believe that Joe lives on the northside, yell north when I point at you.

(An equally robust shout of “NORTH”.)

50/50. I mean, I think that was down to the person. That was 50/50. I'm sure you'll all explain it to me later, but I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'll be back in a moment to, to give you my verdict.

Jesse Thorn: Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

(Applause.)

Joe, how are you feeling about your chances?

Joe: I'm feeling pretty good. I'm feeling confident.

Jesse Thorn: Why is that? You seem like you're talking yourself into that.

(Laughter.)

Joe: Because there's only one true eastside, and that's where I live. I just can't think of it any other way!

Audience Member: *(Shouting.)* The eastside welcomes you!

(Cheers.)

John Hodgman: She just wants your mulch, Joe.

(Laughter and applause.)

Jesse Thorn: Allison, how are you feeling about your chances?

Allison: Very, very confident.

Jesse Thorn: Is that just because it's been revealed this evening that Judge John Hodgman is a compulsive friend-annoyer?

Allison: Yes.

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: Please rise as Judge John Hodgman reenters the courtroom and presents his verdict.

(Thunderous applause.)

John Hodgman: It says here that if I were to rule in your favor, Joe, that not only do I rule that you are in the eastside, but Allison has to introduce you as “Joe from the eastside”?

Joe: Yes, that's correct.

John Hodgman: AKA eastside Joe. AKA Joe East.

[01:00:00]

Joe: I'll take it.

John Hodgman: AKA Too Much Mulch Joe.

Jesse Thorn: Don't be fooled by the money that I've got. I'm still Joe from the block.

John Hodgman: The eastside block, exactly. And Allison, you want me to rule that he lives on the northside. One of the things that I think is complicated is that I don't even know what the hell you're talking about. You know, and unfortunately I put this on both of you. *(Chuckles.)* Now, maybe the issues are a little too complex or inflammatory to really go into the depths of why the eastside is the eastside and the northside is the northside. And I respect that. We're a podcast, we're here in the middle of the afternoon on a Saturday. But nor were you able to effectively, Joe, argue why it was emotionally important to you to associate with the neighborhood that your friend Allison lives in. And I guess other members of your friend group, too. That you might feel like the outlier, perhaps—the one that they don't fully accept because of your address that we saw printed on a screen for everybody.

(Laughter.)

I mean, that's a powerful emotional argument that you could have made, but chose not to. Instead, you said there are chickens there. Which is probably meaningful to a Madisonian. Yeah, chickens are probably a real eastside thing. But to me, your Judge John Hodgman, it means nothing. You didn't come prepared to make your argument about why you belong in the eastside. Nor, Allison, did you come prepared to make an argument about why you should be so cruel as to keep your friend arm's length or side's length away from you.

So, all I am left with, unfortunately, is the angry wisdom of the mob. I went to the crowd, and I asked them their opinion. And I truly felt—I mean, Jesse, Rob, you heard them yell. Did one—? Right down the middle, right chop-chop as they say in Texas Hold ‘em poker. Right down the middle, split. And therefore I can only conclude that the wisest decision is that, Joe, I don't know where you live. But it is absolutely Joe Town, Wisconsin.

(Applause.)

That you define your own neighborhood that is neither east, nor west, nor north, nor south, nor central, nor prime isthmus, or whatever the various neighborhoods are here. You live in Mulchville, Madison. And I'm gonna call you not eastside Joe, but Mulchy Joe from now on.

(Applause.)

This is the sound of a gavel! *(Bangs his gavel.)* Judge John Hodgman rules. That is all.

Jesse Thorn: Allison, Joe, thanks for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. And thanks to you too, Rob Thomas! Rob, if people want to read more of your work, including but not limited to your delightful interview with Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman, where can they go?

Rob Thomas: Please go to CapTimes.com. And thank you for putting up with this. I had the best time.

John Hodgman: And support local journalism!

Rob Thomas: Definitely, please.

John Hodgman: Yeah! Thank you, Rob.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: That's it for this episode of the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. Our thanks to Reddit users u/misfortunemachine and u/funnyfilmfan for naming the case in this episode. Make sure to follow us on Instagram, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman) and on TikTok and YouTube, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJmHodgmanPod).

John Hodgman: And may I say thank you to GoodGodLizzieLemon over there on Apple Podcasts! Gave us a five-star—

Jesse Thorn: I think that's pronounced [GoodGodLizzieLemon](https://www.instagram.com/GoodGodLizzieLemon).

John Hodgman: Excuse me. You're absolutely right. Yeah. [GoodGodLizzieLemon](https://www.instagram.com/GoodGodLizzieLemon) over there on Apple Podcast. They gave us a five-star rating and said, quote, “As a criminal defense attorney”—wow!—“it is delightful to listen to the judge educate disputes fairly, compassionately, and in accordance with the court's precedent. Even silly disputes often

involve finding the crux that implicates how we all treat each other, gender roles, autonomy, and other important considerations. There is genuine wisdom here.” End quote. Thank you very much, [GoodGodLizzieLemon](#), Esquire. And if you're listening to us on Apple Podcasts, why don't you give us a rating and review? It really does help new listeners find the show, as does simply telling your friends, wherever you see them.

Jesse Thorn: Absolutely. And look, Apple Podcasts isn't the only way to listen to our program. There's lots of great ways. You know what I use? I use Overcast.

John Hodgman: Overcast!

Jesse Thorn: I'm just saying, I love Overcast! Love that. Podcast Addict. A lot of people like that. There's a lot of good apps to listen to your favorite podcasts on. If they've got a rating system, please do rate and review. If they don't, please share on social media or just tell a friend in real life. When you're at a cocktail party, say, “Ah, I heard a great thing on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.” They'll say what's that? You'll say, “Well, wait until you hear about these cousins where one of them has five specific properties he needs to own.”

[01:05:00]

John Hodgman: And by the way, if you're at a cocktail party, why didn't you invite me? I like a cocktail party.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Invite me to an It's-It party, please.

The *Judge John Hodgman* podcast created by John Hodgman and Jesse Thorn. Our touring producer was Laura Volk. This episode, recorded by Stephen Colon. Nattie Lopez is our social media manager. AJ McKeon is our editor. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. I saw actually that Laura's band, Skout, had some new music. They're on Instagram, [@SkoutOutLoud](#). S-K-O-U-T Out Loud, really beautiful guitar pop is how I would call it. Like a Fleetwood Mac-y vibe.

John Hodgman: They're wonderful. Skout, S-K-O-U-T, [@SkoutOutLoud](#), Instagram, check out the new song, “In Mourning”, [@SkoutOutLoud](#).

Jesse Thorn: We'll talk to you next time 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!