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**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "Gingersnap Judgment". Joel brings the case against his wife, Cynthia. They often get takeout from a local restaurant. When Joel picks up their order, Cynthia wants him to go through the cookies at the counter to choose the very best one. Joel says he can't handle the cashier's withering gaze as he examines each and every cookie. He's seeking an injunction forbidding cookie searching. Cynthia wants the best possible cookie or no cookie at all. Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide. Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.

*(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)*

**John Hodgman:** Hello. Me, Judge John Hodgman. Welcome to *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, home of classy drama. Tonight, me take you back to ancient Rome for big, big play, *Me Claudius*.

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear them in.

**Jesse Thorn:** Joel and Cynthia, please rise and raise your right hands.

*(Chairs squeak.)*

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 doesn't even really like cookies?

*(They swear.)*

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

**John Hodgman:** You know what cookies I like? Pecan sandies. I like those. Quite savory. Pecan sandies or Pea-can sandies, I don't care how you say it.

**Jesse Thorn:** Pe-cahn sahn-dies.

**John Hodgman:** Pecan sondras. I also like lemon coolers. I'm here in the solar-powered studios of WERU in Orland, Maine—89.9 on your FM dial, [WERU.org](http://WERU.org)—with our Maine local producer, program and operations director here at WERU, Joel the Maine Mann. Joel, favorite cookie? *(Beat.)* Well, we'll get back to Joel on that one.

*(They laugh.)*

In the meantime, other Joel and Cynthia, you may be seated for an immediate summary judgment in one of your favors.

*(Chairs squeak.)*

Can either be named the piece of culture that I referenced as I entered the courtroom? Let's start with... weell, let's see here. Joel, in South Carolina, you were dominating the pre-show conversation. We'll start with Cynthia instead.

**Cynthia:** It sounded like Cookie Monster from *Sesame Street*, but I don't have the specific episode.

**John Hodgman:** You know, that's an incredibly good guess. What I like about it is that it's almost correct, and also you knew that I would insist on knowing the episode in case you knew the answer—or at least the significance. Joel, down there in Charleston, South Carolina, do you have a guess? Do you want to elaborate? Do you want to expand? Do you want to guess more accurately?

**Joel:** So, I came into this with the Tom Waits, Cookie Monster mashup as my pre research guess. Knowing we weren't in a live show, I figured that was unlikely. But I can't get more specific than Cynthia, so I will go with Tom Waits, Cookie Monster mashup.

**John Hodgman:** *(In a guttural Tom Waits impersonation.)* C is for cookie! That's good enough for meeeee.

*(Returning to his usual voice.)* Joel, here in Maine.

**Joel Mann:** Yes, Judge.

**John Hodgman:** Did you get an answer on that favorite cookie yet?

**Joel Mann:** The ones on the computer.

**John Hodgman:** What's that?

**Joel Mann:** The one that's on the computer.

**Jesse Thorn:** Like a web browser, like a web browser cookie, John.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, I got it.

**Jesse Thorn:** So, web browsers have what's called cookies. They're not actual cookies, of course. They're called cookies. So, that's why Joel likes it when the website remembers that he logged in earlier.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'll tell you what, I don't accept that cookie, Joel. No, don't even press that button. We'll come back to you in a minute. Come up with a real cookie. Meanwhile, we're going to hear this case. All guesses are wrong, by the way. Cynthia, you got very close. It is Cookie Monster. It is specifically from *Sesame Street*, episode number 1448. That's one-four-forty-eight. Broadcast November 26th, 1980, in the segment "Monsterpiece Theater", where—a recurring segment where (*giggling*) really Sesame Street getting in the weeds and meta on the public television front.

**Jesse Thorn:** Now, what four-year-old isn't excited to hear from Alistair Cookie?

**John Hodgman:** Alistair Cookie was the host of Masterpiece Theater for so long, including when Masterpiece Theater aired—all 10 or 11 episodes, depending on how you number them—of the very famous British miniseries, historical miniseries, *I, Claudius*, which we did a podcast on it, Jesse. You'll remember, me and Elliott Kalan, called *I, Podius*. But if you thought we were the first to the *I, Claudius* wordplay game, guess again.

[00:05:00]

Because Cookie Monster as Alistair Cookie, introduced Monsterpiece Theater several times on *Sesame Street*, including an episode, which they aired, *Me Claudius*. And go to YouTube and watch this thing. Whether or not you know *I, Claudius*, go and watch it. It's just a bunch of monsters yelling at each other, "NO, ME CLAUDIUS!" Very funny.

Let's go live to Charleston, South Carolina, where our litigants Joel and Cynthia are sitting. Which one of you seeks justice in this court, please?

**Joel:** I do, your honor.

**John Hodgman:** That would be Joel?

**Joel:** Yes.

**John Hodgman:** Okay. And you are husband and wife?

**Joel:** That is correct.

**John Hodgman:** And what is the nature of your complaint, Joel?

**Joel:** Well, so there's a local chain, and for a long time—it's right next to where I work and not close to where we lived. So, I would pick up food on the way home from work.

**John Hodgman:** What is the name of the restaurant?

**Joel:** Verde.

**John Hodgman:** Verde. As in green. V-E-R-D-E.

*(Joel confirms.)*

And what kind of food do they serve there?

**Joel:** If you're familiar with like a Sweetgreen, along those lines. So, salads, salad-based wraps, salad-based bowls.

**John Hodgman:** A south classic. South Carolina salad.

**Joel:** Yes, of course. *(Giggling.)* Lots of kale grown here, I guess.

**John Hodgman:** Oh yeah, classic South Carolina rice bowl. Alright. So, you went to Verde, and what happens when you go to Verde?

**Joel:** So, her request—she always wanted me to check whether there are any quote/unquote “good” cookies. And she defines that as an oatmeal cookie that is appropriately squishy. So, she would like me to mash each one that are individually wrapped until I find a correct one. And if I do not find a suitable cookie, she would like me to not purchase that cookie.

**John Hodgman:** Cynthia, you're in the market for a squishy cookie then?

**Cynthia:** Yes, when the cookies are good and nice and squishy, it's one of the best cookies I've ever had. But sometimes they're not as squishy, and those just aren't my personal favorite. And it's not worth it to me.

**John Hodgman:** I'm just a simple country lawyer. Let me understand. Does this restaurant, Verde, give away free cookies like the classic South Carolina chain DoubleTree Hotels gives away cookies?

**Cynthia:** No, they're not free.

**John Hodgman:** They're not free. Okay. So, you're buying a cookie. You're sending your husband to pick up salad bowls. And you want him to get a cookie, and you want him to feel all the cookies to make sure it's squishy enough before he comes home.

**Cynthia:** That's correct. Yes.

**John Hodgman:** And if the cookie's not squishy enough, do you send him back? You just lock him out, send him back?

**Cynthia:** I just won't eat it, and then I feel bad that it's wasted. But I don't want to eat it.

**John Hodgman:** Do you ever—does Joel ever come home with a hard cookie?

**Cynthia:** It has happened, which is how this case has arisen.

**John Hodgman:** Do they have different kinds of cookies there, or is it all oatmeal cookies?

**Cynthia:** They have a couple of different ones, but the oatmeal one is my favorite.

**John Hodgman:** And how are they made available, Joel? Like, are they in a bowl?

**Joel:** No. So, right next to the cash register where you check out, there's like a little tray. And they're individually wrapped just for the customer to grab and say, "Hey, I want one of these," kind of a last minute, point of sale upcharge. So.

**John Hodgman:** An impulse cookie.

*(Joel confirms.)*

So, and what flavors are there?

**Joel:** Chocolate chip and oatmeal. And I think that's it. I think it's just the two cookie types.

*(Cynthia confirms.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** And you choose... the oatmeal?

**Cynthia:** It's my—yeah, it's my favorite. My top favorite cookie ever is oatmeal chocolate chip. This doesn't have chocolate chips in it, but I do really like the oatmeal.

**John Hodgman:** You know, if your oatmeal cookie is squishy enough, you could get—and your chocolate chip cookie is squishy enough, you could get both and squish them together.

**Cynthia:** That's true. You know, I haven't considered that, but maybe next time.

**John Hodgman:** Joel, you ever consider picking a very squishy oatmeal cookie and a very squishy chocolate chip cookie and unwrapping them in front of the cashier and then squishing them together in your hands while maintaining constant eye contact with the cashier?

**Joel:** Yes, every single time. No, I have never considered that. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** You would enjoy that, right? You would enjoy making that kind of eye contact?

**Joel:** I definitely don't have major anxiety just thinking about it right now.

**John Hodgman:** Okay, I understand. What is your complaint, Joel? Why don't you want to squish the cookies and buy the best, squishiest one for your beloved wife?

**Joel:** Well, I would like to say I do like to pick the squishiest. I would like to pick the best cookie for my lovely wife. But I am unwilling to do the smushing of each one in order to make the purchase. Because then, inevitably, that means there are cookies I have smushed that I am not purchasing, and that just doesn't seem right. And also, the person working there is just staring at you at that point, waiting for you to pay. So, they're watching me squish it, and I'm just—I've never done it. I'm unwilling to do it.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, you've never done it even once?

**Joel:** Uh, no. I have—I've been trying to understand what she likes. And after the purchase has been made that she makes—and she squishes them frequently; she does go to this restaurant both together and on her own.

[00:10:00]

I've been trying to learn what exactly she means. I still can't fully define it, what a good versus bad cookie—we actually brought one today that she says is not good, but was indistinguishable to me from one that we purchased earlier in the week that she thought was great.

**John Hodgman:** I'll definitely be asking you to squish that cookie a little later on, but I need to clarify something.

Cynthia, when you go into Verde on your own—I don't mind buzz marketing this classic South Carolina salad bowl establishment. It's historic, it's legendary, everyone knows. Every ghost tour goes by every cobblestone to get there, because you gotta see it if you're there in Charleston, South Carolina—hometown of Janie Haddad Tompkins, a guest on this very program.

When you go into Verde, do you squish your own cookie or what?

**Cynthia:** Yes, I do. I look through—we'll do first a visual check to see which ones I think might be the best, and then from there squish a few to really understand which one is going to be the best for me.

**Jesse Thorn:** What qualities are you looking for visually?

**Cynthia:** Visually, I like one that's a little like underdone, so not too crispy. So, the coloring of it, I don't want it to be too brown. And also you can kind of just tell when it's like a little—not doughy, but not cooked as, as long.

**Jesse Thorn:** You're essentially looking for a bowl of oatmeal.

**Joel:** With sugar.

**Cynthia:** With a lot of sugar, yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Uh-huh. Yeah, I understand that most cookie appraisers will say pale means squishy, brown means crispy. That makes sense to me. You have no qualms about squishing a cookie in front of a stranger, right?

**Cynthia:** I do not.

**John Hodgman:** And do they ever say anything to you about it?

**Cynthia:** No, usually it's like a teen working there. I don't know that they really care that much.

**John Hodgman:** It's a teen. Yeah. I remember those. So, Cynthia, you don't feel bad about leaving behind a squish cookie for other people?

**Cynthia:** I do not. It's not like a full squish. It's just a light touch to kind of get a feel for the squishiness.

**Jesse Thorn:** Just a gentle dance of the fingers, like a concert pianist.

**John Hodgman:** (*Laughs.*) Like something—like you might test an avocado or a tomato.

**Cynthia:** Yes, exactly.

**John Hodgman:** Alright, that's a pretty good defense. Alright, Joel, is Cynthia lying in terms of the force of her squishing?

**Joel:** No, she's not lying. But! The last time we went together, and she did her touches and then picked out a cookie that she liked, she brought it to the table, and the first thing she said was, “See, you can tell just by looking at it how good this one is.”

And I was like, “Then why do we need to do any touching at all?” Because what she's looking for is that light color and that, frankly, greasiness in the package. And that seems to be enough, in my mind, to make a determination as to the quality of the cookie without the need for any sort of touching.

**John Hodgman:** Cynthia, Joel is saying that you should be able to visually appraise the squishiness of the cookie without touching. Is this true, or no?

**Cynthia:** I would say no. It is the first step in identifying the best cookie, but it is not the full process. I would also say that the cookie that Joel purchased today after hearing about what I'm looking for, it's still not a good cookie. So, he clearly did not do the second.

**Joel:** I would like to object slightly in that—

**John Hodgman:** I'll allow it.

**Joel:** I did not see any cookies today that match that same greasiness factor that you showed the last time. But in light of the podcast, I made a purchase anyway. So, my suspicion was it was not an acceptable cookie today.

**John Hodgman:** How long has this been going on, Cynthia? When did you first discover your favorite squishy oatmeal cookie, would you say?

**Cynthia:** Maybe five years or so.

**John Hodgman:** Oh! Okay. This is a long-time thing. And how long have you been inviting Joel to go and squish the cookies for you?

**Cynthia:** He didn't start getting takeout for us until his office moved, which was probably a year or so ago. A

**Joel:** A year and a half ago, something like that.

**Cynthia:** A year and a half.

**John Hodgman:** So, that's when you started saying, "Hey, on your way home, go over to Verde and get me one of those squishy cookies that I like." And yet, does he do a good job or no?

**Cynthia:** There have been times where it has not been a good cookie. Then I refuse to eat it, and then it causes some tension. Which is what, you know, sparked the bringing this case to your attention.

**John Hodgman:** Jesse Thorn, I'm about to make a pun that's also a sports reference. You ready for it?

**Jesse Thorn:** Wow. Okay. I mean, I'll never be ready, but I'm as ready as I'll ever be.

**John Hodgman:** Joel Mann, it's a pun and a sports reference.

**Joel Mann:** Go for it.

**John Hodgman:** When it comes to his success rate in picking a cookie you like, what's Joel's batter average?

*(Jesse laughs.)*

**Cynthia:** Out of 1,000 cookies, I would say about 400 would be appropriate.

**John Hodgman:** So, under 50%, obviously.

**Cynthia:** Yes.

[00:15:00]

**Jesse Thorn:** And yet, it's safe to say he's the Ted Williams of oatmeal cookies.

*(They laugh.)*

**Joel:** I mean, 400 is great!

**John Hodgman:** Well, chop his head off and freeze it. He's the Ted Williams of oatmeal cookies.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**John Hodgman:** Hello, I'm your Judge John Hodgman. The *Judge John Hodgman* podcast is brought to you every week by you, our members, of course. Thank you so much for your support of this podcast and all of your favorite podcasts at [MaximumFun.org](https://MaximumFun.org), and they are all your favorites. If you want to join the many member supporters of this podcast and this network, boy oh boy, that would be fantastic. Just go to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join).

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**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**John Hodgman:** Why are you even trusting Joel to do this if 60% of the time he's bringing you a bad cookie?

**Cynthia:** Well, that's—yeah, I don't want a cookie if he's going to get a bad one, so.

**John Hodgman:** You want him to get better.

**Cynthia:** Yeah, I would like him to get better at picking cookies or just not get me a cookie. But if he's not going to get me a cookie, then I want him to get me a different dessert.

[00:20:00]

**Joel:** So, my approach has historically been I just get the best cookie I can figure out visually, and just roll the dice. So, I've never done the not buy the cookie thing. I don't personally feel

a lot of—I'm very anti food waste, generally. And I feel like normally in the situation where she won't have it, I just eat it.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, but you're facilitating food waste, because you're rolling the dice on a cookie. Which is a terrible way to choose a cookie. And you're bringing home cookies that Cynthia has said to her are inedible. And those cookies are getting wasted, aren't they?

**Joel:** Well, they're getting eaten just by me instead of her.

**John Hodgman:** Maybe the dice were loaded when you rolled the dice. Maybe you wanted to have Cynthia's cookie and eat it too. You got her a bad cookie knowing that she would give it to you. That's my accusation.

**Joel:** I personally would have just bought a chocolate chip cookie if I wanted a cookie from Verde.

**Jesse Thorn:** Why is that? Is that because that's a better type of cookie?

**Joel:** 100%.

**John Hodgman:** How do you feel about the texture? Need it be squishy?

**Joel:** I also have preferences about how I like my chocolate chip cookie, which is the skinny flat ones with a little bit of a crusty edge but still gooey in the middle. That said, there is no chocolate chip cookie that can't make it work with a little bit of milk.

**John Hodgman:** So, first of all, that ideal chocolate chip cookie that you're talking about is that mix of crispy edge and molten center, that's very hard to get. You're not getting that wrapped up at Verde ever, I betcha.

**Joel:** I think that's fair. I think they tend to be more of the hard crust chocolate chip cookie at Verde. Which again, great place. I don't want to badmouth them, but those cookies aren't my favorite.

**John Hodgman:** Don't worry about it; they're getting plenty of free advertising.

**Jesse Thorn:** You know who I bet makes those good cookies? Jennifer Marmor.

*(John agrees.)*

Jennifer Marmor's pretty serious about her cookie cooking. She hasn't said anything into the microphone, but she's making a face that I'll reflect for our viewers on YouTube, which is: mmm, yeah. Mmm, yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Yeah, that'd be a hard yes.

**Jesse Thorn:** Uhhh, yeah. One time Jennifer Marmor almost cried because she found out that sometimes I use a silicone mat on my cookie sheet.

**John Hodgman:** On your cookie sheet? Is that not correct?

**Jesse Thorn:** No, cause it doesn't—

**Jennifer Marmor:** You're not gonna get those hard crusty edges with a silicone mat!

**John Hodgman:** Here she comes, finally!

*(They laugh.)*

We lured Jennifer Marmor—Jennifer Marmor enters the chat with vengeance.

**Jesse Thorn:** Gotta use parchment.

**John Hodgman:** You don't like a Silpat? You don't like a silicone mat, Jennifer Marmor?

**Jennifer Marmor:** I wanted to, but I don't. I'll use it to roast some veggies, I guess.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, but you still—Jennifer, you're totally right. You're 100%, you're 1,000% right about it.

*(Jennifer laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** Because you figured out what you like, and you insist upon it, Jennifer Marmor. Because you have standards in the way Joel in South Carolina does not. Because Joel has just said what his ideal chocolate chip cookie is, and yet he'll eat any old wrapped up cookie from Verde. So, Joel, let me just clarify something. Have you ever squished a cookie for your wife?

**Joel:** Not prepurchase, only post-purchase.

**John Hodgman:** Right. Okay. Got it. And then you're like, “Ugh.” Have you ever gotten one? And you're like, “Oh, I blew it. Not squishy enough.”

**Joel:** There have been times where I said, “I'm pretty sure this isn't going to pass muster.” Yes.

**Jesse Thorn:** And then do you just eat it on the way home?

**Joel:** I can't recall, but that would be one outcome. Yeah. No, I feel like I always still give it to you as a, you know, “Hey, it's up to you.”

**John Hodgman:** If we lived in a society where squishing a prepackaged cookie was as common as gently squishing a tomato or an avocado to determine texture and freshness, do you feel like you could do a good job? Are you capable of finding the cookie your wife wants?

**Joel:** I would be—if it were similar to kind of the, let's call it vegetable aisle rules in a grocery store. I think, yeah. I think to me it's more the social stigma of staring down a teen in a retail environment that is really causing my issues, as opposed to—

**John Hodgman:** Again, Joel, you don't have to stare at them while you're doing this.

*(They laugh.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Cynthia, do you have a concrete rubric or set of best practices? I mean, we've heard about a few characteristics you're looking for. Have you explicitly outlined exactly what you need Joel to be seeking?

**Cynthia:** I have not. I don't think it's that complicated. But if you're not gonna—if you're not willing to squish the cookie, then it's really hard to get it right.

**John Hodgman:** Now, there is a cookie in the room down there, in our studio in South Carolina, correct?

**Joel:** That's correct. A defunct cookie.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, it's already—it's a rejected cookie?

**Joel:** That has been my understanding.

**Cynthia:** It's not the worst that he's brought, but it's not tip top.

**John Hodgman:** Where is this mid cookie at the moment? Okay. I see it there.

[00:25:00]

You know, you're doing it wrong, Joel. Hold it the other way. You know what? Give it to Cynthia. Tell me what you're seeing that Joel isn't seeing, in terms of your assessment of the cookie. Imagine that you're coming across this cookie. You haven't tasted it yet. What do you see? What do you feel? What are your criteria? So that maybe Joel can understand a little bit better what he did wrong.

**Jesse Thorn:** And you can feel free to put it in your mouth, swish it around, spit it out.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Yeah. Make sure you sniff it real hard to get its bouquet.

**Cynthia:** So, this cookie I would say is—it's not—yeah, it's not terrible. It's a little darker than I would prefer. It's also a little thicker than I would usually prefer. Usually the thicker ones somehow are cooked more and somehow the flatter ones are usually a little less cooked. And yeah, just like—I mean, I don't even squish enough that you'd be able to see it, but just a light feel. It's not optimal.

**John Hodgman:** How would you describe the squishiness?

**Cynthia:** It's like a medium. It's not like a very—it's not like a crunchy cookie by any means. It would definitely feel soft if you were eating it, but not as soft as I like.

**John Hodgman:** You mentioned the idea of another dessert option. What else—if Joel can only get a bad cookie, what is it that you want Joel to bring home for you?

**Cynthia:** So, when this case was brought about, I decided that if he can't get the cookie that I want, then I want him to go get a better dessert from somewhere else. And right next to the location that he gets the takeout is a grocery store, which has endless options of a better dessert.

**John Hodgman:** So, you want him to make a second stop at the grocery store unless there's a cookie to your liking at Verde. And what would you like him to get for you there?

**Cynthia:** Depends on the day, but probably the default of Fish Food, Ben and Jerry's.

**John Hodgman:** Mm-hm. Okay, fair enough. When you get ice cream, how squishy do you like it?

**Cynthia:** I like it soft enough that I can, you know, get a spoonful. I don't have to like hack at it. But I don't want it melty.

**Joel:** Her ideal ice cream is actually soft serve; it should be mentioned.

**Cynthia:** Yes, that is correct. That is my top ice cream choice.

**John Hodgman:** You married a squishy loving woman, Joel.

**Joel:** I sure did.

**John Hodgman:** And why don't you want to make her happy by bringing home a squishy cookie?

**Joel:** I certainly do, but sometimes a squishy cookie isn't available. And the second location to date has been—I'm just trying to get home to see our beautiful, beautiful daughter as well. So, having to add a grocery store trip just reduces my evening time with our daughter. So, I feel like that's a bridge too far.

**John Hodgman:** Cynthia, Joel says that he just wants to come home to see your daughter. You would rather have an absentee father than a bad cookie?

**Cynthia:** That is a twist that I didn't fully see coming.

**John Hodgman:** Well, a soft serve lover should love a twist.

**Cynthia:** I think that, yeah, just—(*chuckling*) that's a good point.

**Jesse Thorn:** You know what, John? Next year, let's twist again like we did the previous summer.

**Cynthia:** I guess I would say that if he is unwilling, just pure unwilling to test the cookies, then I do want another dessert. But if he tests the cookies, and there's not a good option, he doesn't have to get another dessert.

**John Hodgman:** What if he tests the cookies and he judges wrong?

**Cynthia:** Then that's okay. If he does his best. I think he could—to his point, I think if he did it, he would improve upon it.

**Jesse Thorn:** How many cookies would you ask him to test before giving up?

**Cynthia:** I would say like a minimum of five.

**John Hodgman:** How many do you typically do?

**Cynthia:** It depends on how many are in there. But like five, I would say.

**John Hodgman:** Let's say there are five in there. You test all five.

**Cynthia:** Unless I can like visually rule some out, then yes, I would test all of them.

**John Hodgman:** Joel, you've never squished the cookie before, right?

**Joel:** Not prepurchase.

**John Hodgman:** So, you've never been standing there squishing and someone said something to you about it or noticed or said that it was gross.

**Joel:** That is correct. My anxiety is presumptive.

**John Hodgman:** Well, you could attribute it to your anxiety. But you could also attribute it to common sense and not being gross with food you haven't purchased yet.

**Joel:** Trying to be charitable, I think. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** I'm clearly—I mean, look, I'm playing both sides of this a little bit. I will not recuse myself, because I have not yet decided how I feel about this cookie squishing.

**Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, I could suggest something here. I think there is Cynthia, there are three others among us—four, including Joel, who's also on camera. Perhaps we could all stare coldly at Cynthia as though we are waiting to be done ringing up her order while she reenacts the squeezing of five or more cookies.

**Cynthia:** Absolutely no, thank you. *(Laughs.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Oh!

**John Hodgman:** Okay. Why? Because we're not teens?

**Cynthia:** Yeah, you're not teens working in an establishment where I'm trying to make a purchase.

[00:30:00]

You're just people staring at me, looking for me to do something wrong.

**Jesse Thorn:** So, the teens deserve it.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah.

*(Joel laughs.)*

Teens have never looked at someone waiting for them to do something wrong.

**Jesse Thorn:** You would like to be substitute teacher-ish, if possible.

**John Hodgman:** So, when Joel refuses—vocally or in practice—to squeeze the cookie, how do you feel?

**Cynthia:** I feel a little frustrated sometimes, because I really wanted a good cookie. But I also understand the anxiety piece of it. And as somebody who has a lot of my own anxiety to deal with, I can definitely empathize with that feeling. While I don't have it in that particular situation, I can understand the feeling of discomfort.

**Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, Cynthia is the very rare anxiety sufferer who suffers less anxiety under the gaze of teens.

*(They laugh.)*

**Joel:** No, she's terrified of teens in other situations. Like, in our relationship, this is a role reversal a little bit. And it's always been bewildering to me. Because if someone were to be anxious about a social situation, it would be more likely to be Cynthia. But for some reason, this one weird loophole, she just—it doesn't faze her at all. And I'm just like—I can't do it. Like, *(laughing)* I don't know!

**John Hodgman:** What do you think that's about?

**Joel:** I just—I do have a theory about that, and it's because at some point we brought up the whole fruit thing. And it's just socially acceptable to do that. When we buy peaches, I won't buy a peach I haven't smelled. Because if it doesn't smell right, it's a bad peach. It's just—it's that simple.

**John Hodgman:** How close do you bring it to your nose before you put it back in the pile?

**Joel:** Not too close. Like, here, maybe.

*(John reacts skeptically.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** You have to slice it thin enough that it can pass in and out of the nose without touching anything, John.

**John Hodgman:** I got it. You'll dare to squeeze a peach is what you're saying.

**Joel:** I think most people would say it's inappropriate to touch food, except for those limited kind of vegetable or fruit situations that we've just somehow as humans have adopted as that's okay. Whether it should be okay or not is the subject of some debate, but I think my sense of it is the average person—and when I'm projecting what the person across the counter is thinking, they're thinking, “What is this person doing this gross thing for?” And that gives me anxiety.

**John Hodgman:** But what is the theory that you have or claim to have as to why Cynthia is not made anxious by this ritual, whereas in other circumstances she would be made anxious?

**Joel:** I think the desire for the cookie overwhelms the anxiety reflex.

**John Hodgman:** What do you think about that theory, Cynthia?

**Cynthia:** Yeah, I think that's pretty solid. I also just don't think that it's as gross as Joel does. They're individually wrapped. I don't know, there's—I just don't think it's that big of a deal.

**John Hodgman:** When you squeeze the cookie, are you leaving it deformed?

**Cynthia:** No.

**John Hodgman:** Are you literally leaving your fingerprints in the cookie?

**Cynthia:** It's just as if—I just pick it up and can just tell from just picking up the cookie.

**John Hodgman:** Just by picking it up?

**Cynthia:** I don't have to like—I'm not like, you know, squishing it. It's just like a light pick up. I'm kind of—

**Jesse Thorn:** You're not biting it like a piece of eight.

**Cynthia:** Right. Right.

**John Hodgman:** (*Laughs.*) Why don't you just pick your own cookies?

**Cynthia:** Well, I do if I'm going to get this food myself. But because this location is so convenient for Joel to pick up dinner on the way home, it's also—there's not a ton of healthy options for takeout near us, I would say. And so, this one is a little healthy, so I do like to get it when I can.

**John Hodgman:** How old is your daughter?

**Cynthia:** She'll be two in October.

**John Hodgman:** Why don't you just send her to buy a cookie? I'm sure she'd love to squish some cookies. That's age appropriate.

**Cynthia:** She would.

**Jesse Thorn:** Do you take them from—I'm still visualizing this. Do you just snake your hand into the pile and just doodle your fingers around a little bit, like you would if you were shoving your hands into a sand pit? Or do you like pick them up and move them over into a new pile of tested but unsatisfactory cookies? What's the physical process going on?

**Cynthia:** It's more like—I mean, to go back to the nice CD reference, it's almost like if there was a row of CDs, but like in a store where they're kind of together. And you kind of just shuffle through them to kind of look at the, you know.

**Jesse Thorn:** Your crate digging.

**John Hodgman:** Exactly, Bailiff Jesse Thorn.

**Jesse Thorn:** Hashtag #DustyFingers.

**John Hodgman:** And you're not squeezing? Are you squeezing, or are you not squeezing?

**Cynthia:** It's not like a hard squeeze. It's a firm hold.

[00:35:00]

**John Hodgman:** (*Snorts.*) Fair enough. So, Joel has never squeezed a cookie for you, even a firm hold cookie for you. Do you feel let down by him in the marriage?

**Cynthia:** I don't feel let down, but I do feel frustrated and disappointed that I don't have a cookie.

**John Hodgman:** Is there any—is he in other ways a pretty good husband and partner and friend and whole human being in his own right?

**Cynthia:** Yes, he is.

**John Hodgman:** This is the one thing? This is the one nit to pick?

**Cynthia:** I'm sure if I was really impressed, I could think of some other small things, but this is the—

**John Hodgman:** Oh, I'm gonna give you a firm hold. I'm gonna give you a little squeeze on that one.

(*Cynthia laughs.*)

No. Don't look for fights in life. That's the first rule of this podcast. Don't look for disputes.

**Cynthia:** I didn't even really realize this was a dispute until he told me that he submitted it to be on the show.

**John Hodgman:** So, you didn't know that it made him uncomfortable?

**Cynthia:** I knew that it made him uncomfortable. I didn't realize that his discomfort was to the level of needing an injunction to have me stop asking him to do this.

**Jesse Thorn:** To be fair, on every episode of this show, we beg people to send in nonsense like this.

(*They laugh.*)

**Joel:** Yeah, we definitely talked about, prior to me submitting it. That wasn't the first time you were aware of me being like, "I don't really want to do this."

**Cynthia:** Right, but the level of your discomfort I was unaware of.

**Joel:** Sure.

**John Hodgman:** Do you want him to learn how to pick a cookie better and bring you the right cookie? Or would you like him to bring you no cookie at all? What's your preference?

**Cynthia:** If he's willing to touch them and to give them a firm hold, then I would like him to learn. But if he's not, then I would prefer just no cookie.

**John Hodgman:** Are the cookies in a sealed wrapping, or are they just in a plastic sleeve with an open top?

**Joel:** With like a light adhesive, so it's a fold over kind of situation. You know.

**Cynthia:** With a sticker.

**Joel:** I wouldn't call it airtight, that's for sure.

**John Hodgman:** When you are selecting your cookie, or when you're selecting her cookie, are there people behind you in line? Do you feel like you're holding up the line?

**Joel:** There are normally—there's almost always people in line. I think the pacing of it, because it's one of those, they kind of make it as you go down the line, where I do think the time or making people wait is not a factor.

**John Hodgman:** And Cynthia, when you're rifling through these cookies, no one has ever made a comment to you of any kind?

**Cynthia:** Nobody has ever made a comment to me. I think that if there were people waiting behind me in line, I would just not get a cookie. Because that to me would make me feel uncomfortable, if I was holding people up with my cookie searching. But to Joel's point, there's rarely somebody just waiting right behind you to pay. And so, I feel like there's ample time to select a cookie.

**John Hodgman:** And the 60% of the time that Joel brings back an insufficient cookie, what happens to the bad cookies that Joel brings home?

**Joel:** I eat them.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, you eat them. It says here, Cynthia, that your ideal ruling is for Joel to do as he instructed and get to rifling. Is that correct?

**Cynthia:** That is correct.

**John Hodgman:** You should just do it.

**Cynthia:** That would be my ideal scenario.

**John Hodgman:** And if there isn't one there that is to your—you've trained him to pick a cookie to your satisfaction. And if he does not find one then he's got to go get some Fish Food ice cream at the thing next door.

*(Cynthia confirms.)*

Okay. Why is that unreasonable, Joel?

**Joel:** Well, I'll just say that—yeah. Overcoming the social stigma of squishing the cookie, if it were ruled to do so, I would do it. One, I have a feeling I wouldn't necessarily still bat 1,000, even with that. I think Cynthia has some alchemy to her touch or something that makes her—how she makes her decisions. But I also feel strongly based on what I've learned earlier this week in a prolonged discussion about this we had internally that my batting average of visual inspection would be higher.

**John Hodgman:** Wait, I'm not sure I followed that. Your batting average would be higher under what circumstances?

**Joel:** Well, for the first time, when we went earlier to the restaurant earlier this week, she indicated that like you can kind of see the greasiness. Like, all that stuff was new information that was not previously shared about the visual inspection that she does. So, I think if I applied that going forward, I would do better than 400.

**John Hodgman:** So, you're saying that you can do better without squishing?

**Joel:** Based on what I know now, yes.

**John Hodgman:** Right. Okay. I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'm here in my summer chambers, so I'm going to rifle through the LPs in the other room, come back after touching a lot of things. And I'll give you my verdict in a moment.

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

*(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)*

Cynthia, how are you feeling about your chances in the case?

**Cynthia:** Not great. But you know, I think a lot has come out of this case. And I think even if Joel wins this case, that he will be better at identifying cookies for me. And so, I'm excited about that. It's a real win/win in that way.

**Jesse Thorn:** How are you feeling, Joel?

[00:40:00]

**Joel:** I'm torn. I have a feeling the judge has been underplaying his belief on the grossness of this practice, so far during the podcast. So, I'm hopeful on that end.

**Jesse Thorn:** Anyway, we'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all this when we come back in just a moment.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Promo:**

**Music:** Relaxed, lo-fi synth.

**Brea Grant:** Oh darling, why won't you accept my love?

**Mallory O'Meara:** My dear, even though you are a duke, I could never love you. You... you... borrowed a book from me and never returned it!

**Brea:** (*Gasp!*) Save yourself from this terrible fate by listening to Reading Glasses.

**Mallory:** We'll help you get those borrowed books back and solve all your other reader problems.

**Brea:** Reading Glasses, every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

(*Music fades out.*)

**Promo:**

**Music:** Gentle, quiet acoustic guitar.

**John Moe:** (*Softly.*) Hello, sleepy heads. *Sleeping with Celebrities* is your podcast pillow pal. We talk to remarkable people about unremarkable topics, all to help you slow down your brain and drift off to sleep. For instance, we have the remarkable Alan Tudyk.

**Alan Tudyk:** You hand somebody a yardstick after they've shopped at your general store; the store's name is constantly in your heart, because yardsticks become part of the family.

**John Moe:** *Sleeping With Celebrities*, hosted by me—John Moe—on [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) or wherever you get your podcasts. Night, night.

(*Music fades out.*)

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Judge John Hodgman road court is getting ready to roll. We're getting the—we bought the Madden Cruiser.

**John Hodgman:** (*Laughs.*) I wish we were going around in a big tour bus, but we're going to do a whole mixture of planes, trains, and automobiles to bring *Judge John Hodgman* live to you. If you've been listening to this episode, it would seem that you have been, you know just how much fun a live episode can be. Well, guess what? We're coming to a city near you, I hope, including New York City, Philadelphia. Going back to Washington, DC. First time to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. First time to Ann Arbor, Michigan, which is a free show at a library. We're going back to Madison, Wisconsin. The Fitzgerald Theater in St. Paul, Minnesota. First time in Burlington, Vermont, home of the fish food. Portland, Maine, we're coming back with Joel Mann and the Night and Day Jazz Trio, I hope. Joel, you say yes?

**Joel Mann:** We're in.

**John Hodgman:** Alright, good. Turner's Falls, Massachusetts is a reunion with Monte Belmonte in my old hometown. And my real hometown, Brookline, Massachusetts, is welcoming us at the place where I used to work when I was 19 years old, the Coolidge Corner Theater. And then when we skip over into 2025—because you know it's coming—we're going to be in Vancouver, Seattle, Portland, Oregon, Los Angeles, and San Francisco as well. Tickets are on sale now for all of these dates at [MaximumFun.org/events](https://MaximumFun.org/events). Go there for more info and click those links and get those tix.

**Jesse Thorn:** [MaximumFun.org/events](https://MaximumFun.org/events). Get those tickets. A lot of those shows are already starting to fill up. I saw, for example—you know, this is our first time in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Right now, Pittsburgh is leading the pack sales-wise. It is getting close in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Grab your tickets for all of these places. It's different in every single place.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, that's right. It's a different show every night, because we have different disputes every night. And that's thanks to you. If you have a dispute that you'd like us to consider for live adjudication on stage, submit it now to [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). Make sure you let us know that you want us to consider it for the live show in the city where you live. And remember, [MaximumFun.org/events](https://MaximumFun.org/events). Tickets are really going quickly. So, get over there, get your tickets and get us your disputes at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). Let's get back to the case.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

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

*(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)*

**John Hodgman:** Okay, before I render my verdict, I just need to ask Joel Mann a question. Joel, I'm going to ask you a question, and I don't want you to think about it. I just need your gut reaction. Okay?

*(Joel confirms.)*

I just need to not get into your head again. Squishin' cookies: cool or not cool?

**Joel Mann:** Not cool.

**John Hodgman:** It doesn't feel cool to me either, I have to say.

**Joel Mann:** No.

**John Hodgman:** I have to say, it doesn't feel cool to me... I mean, first of all, it wasn't that long ago when we weren't even allowed to be in the same room with each other. And now, one thing I thought was never going to come back was salad bars. Now we're breathing all over each other's food. There's like open vats of guacamole in the Sky Club at the airport. And all of a sudden we're feeling each other's cookies, and this is fine. Perhaps I'm a little oversensitive to it. But I mean, the truth is that like, you know, yes, it is I guess socially acceptable to sniff a peach and squeeze an avocado. But you have to be very tentative with it, right? Because you might be—you could be potentially ruining that piece of produce for the person behind you.

And if you're standing in a line, and you're thinking to myself, "I might want to get myself a cookie," and then you watch—you watch Joel or Cynthia like just touch each cookie, even with the plastic there.

[00:45:00]

I have to say, I would find it to be on a baseline, unappetizing. And this is where the categorical imperative comes in. We've talked about it before. Remember that Joel Mann, the categorical imperative?

**Joel Mann:** No.

**John Hodgman:** Act as though what you're doing is a universal principle that everyone will do, basically? Don't write me, Kant fans. I got it right pretty much. You know, you act as though what you're doing is a universal principle. So, for example, is it cool for me to squeeze a cookie as long as it's cool for everyone to squeeze a cookie? How would you feel? I probably should have asked Cynthia at one point if she were waiting in line and someone had squeezed all of the oatmeal cookies before her, Cynthia, would you still get a cookie?

**Cynthia:** Yeah, probably.

**John Hodgman:** Alright, then you win. Goodbye.

*(They laugh.)*

I'm just going to say that I think that what Cynthia is doing is kind of on the bubble of acceptability. You know, it started out by talking about squeezing, and then it became just a firm hold, and then a visual inspection. I think that if you were to go in there, Cynthia, on your own and touch all of the cookie wrappers to determine the cookie that you wanted to get, I'm not going to stand in the way of that. Because I feel like to a degree that's therapeutic to you, because this is an area where you don't feel a certain measure of social anxiety. And that's probably a good thing for you. And I take you at your word that probably the person behind the counter does not care. And while I would be skeeved out by it, I'm not going to eat a cookie anyway, because that's just not who I am.

But I would find, in Joel's case, he should not be forced to do something that makes him uncomfortable. Because it intrinsically makes him uncomfortable. It might make other people uncomfortable. We don't have evidence of it one way or the other. But you're looking at me, and you can see I'm hunched up. I feel a little uncomfortable with all this cookie touching talk. I don't think Joel should have to do it. I think that you should both—and I'm going to order you both to go to this restaurant a few times and do strong visual examinations of the cookies. Go on an off hour, so you're not holding up the line. But really, Cynthia, hold a seminar for Joel. Say like, “I think—which ones do you like?” And Joel will point them out without touching. And then you can go, “You're wrong, you're right, you're wrong, that one.” Whatever it is. Teach him your visual criteria, right?

And teach your daughter. Teach your children well; they're the future after all. Pretty soon she's gonna be out there selecting cookies for you and then for herself. And rely upon Joel to learn and improve without going through the literal motions of flipping through all the cookie LPs in the bin, because I just don't think people love the idea of watching someone else touch all their cookies. I just don't think it's—I don't think it's really—I got to go with Joel Mann. I don't think it's cool, honestly. I think you're cool, Cynthia. I think you're cool. I think you have good taste. You like what you like, and I think that it's valuable that you advocate for yourself. And I think that it's right that you're like, “I want the cookie I want or no cookie at all. If not the cookie I want, go get Fish Food.”

I think that's a good impulse. And I'm glad that—you know, I think that it's so much on the—I'm gonna get letters, but I'm gonna say: if you're alone in the woods, and a tree falls, and you're feeling cookies, and there's no one there to hear it or observe it except for a teen who's just waiting for the clock to reach a certain time so he/she/they can go home? *(Whispering.)* I'm not going to stand here waiting. It never happened as far as I'm concerned. *(Returning to his usual speaking voice.)* But Joel, you never have to squeeze a cookie again in your life. Look for the indicators of the squishy cookie. And I bet you can do it better more often than not. As far as the going to the second location for Fish Food, maybe you just go to both locations no matter what, cover all your bases.

*(They chuckle.)*

Finally, before I go, Joel Mann here in Maine. Favorite cookie. What is it?

**Joel Mann:** Shortbread.

**John Hodgman:** Did not see that coming! This is the sound of a gavel.

**Sound Effect:** (*Cookie Monster speaking.*) COOKIE! Om nom nom, nom nom, oh, nom nom nom!

**John Hodgman:** Judge John Hodgman rules that is all.

**Jesse Thorn:** (*Whispered.*) Shortbread. (*Spoken.*) I'm stunned, but you know what? I respect it, John.

**John Hodgman:** I like shortbread too. It's like a pecan sandie without the pecans.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, I mean, it's basically a piece of butter.

**John Hodgman:** Let's do it!

(*They laugh.*)

As long as the butter is soft enough. I do have to squeeze the butter before I ever buy it at the supermarket. Go on, Jesse Thorn, I apologize.

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

(*Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.*)

Carolina Joel, how are you feeling about the decision in this case?

**Joel:** I feel exonerated on all counts. And yeah, I feel great. It's what I wanted. And I will pledge, of course, I want my wife to have delicious cookies.

[00:50:00]

And I will do my utmost to make sure I can identify them visually.

**Jesse Thorn:** Cynthia, how are you feeling?

**Cynthia:** I'm a little disappointed, but I understand. I definitely can see how it's gross. And again, I don't want Joel to feel uncomfortable. And so, I respect and will not ask him to touch any more cookies.

**Jesse Thorn:** Have you ever thought about this, Cynthia? I'm just throwing it out there—keeping ice cream at your house?

(*They laugh.*)

**Cynthia:** I have thought about it. It just—it goes real quick. It goes real quick.

**Joel:** We're all big ice cream fans at our house, and it does not last long.

**Jesse Thorn:** The other day I said to my therapist—she asked for some reason if I have a healthy diet. And I said, “Yes. I do eat ice cream every day.”

She said, “Jesse, I love that for you.”

*(They laugh.)*

Well, thank you, Joel and Cynthia, for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

**Joel:** Thank you.

**Cynthia:** Thank you.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Another *Judge John Hodgman* case in the books. In just a moment we will dispense some swift justice. First, our thanks to Redditor u/MkBecker for naming this week's episode “Gingersnap Judgment”. you can join us on the Maximum Fun Reddit, that is at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun). That's where we name these episodes and discuss the shows and—

**John Hodgman:** Have a good time, generally.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, just have a really nice time! Really good vibes at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun), or r/MaximumFun if you prefer. You can find evidence and photos from this show on our Instagram account. That's [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman). you can also find us on TikTok and on YouTube, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJHodgmanPod). I would encourage you to do so.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, full episodes are on YouTube! Not just little clips, the whooole thing from soup to nuts to squishy cookies.

**Jesse Thorn:** John and I are also on Instagram. John is [@JohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JohnHodgman), right? I'm not mistaken.

*(John confirms.)*

I'm [@JesseThornVeryFamous](https://www.instagram.com/JesseThornVeryFamous). Just started an independent of Put This On personal Instagram, so go follow [@JesseThornVeryFamous](https://www.instagram.com/JesseThornVeryFamous). And yeah, make sure and check out those videos, because those videos are really neat. We've got a review here from Apple Podcasts, John.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, I want to say thank you to SiverCity94 on Apple Podcasts. Wrote a really nice review saying, “The best show that everyone can laugh with. Five stars.” Thank you, SiverCity94. They write, “Everyone in my family loves to listen and comment on the disputes every week. From my 80-year-old mother to my 10-year-old niece, everyone agrees Judge Hodgman is the best.” That’s very, very kind. Thank you very much, SiverCity94. And thank you very much to your 80-year-old mother and your 10-year-old niece.

And if you're listening to us on Apple Podcasts, why don't you give us a rating and review? It really does help people find the show. By the way, go ahead and tell people about the show, however you listen to it. It really does help. If you go to the YouTube, and you watch the YouTube, please subscribe and hit the notifications and maybe share a video. Or just say to someone, you know, “Hey, you know, what’s a good podcast? *Judge John Hodgman.*”

Joel Mann.

**Joel Mann:** Yes, judge.

**John Hodgman:** You know, what’s a good podcast? *Judge John Hodgman.*

**Joel Mann:** *Judge John Hodgman.* It’s my favorite.

**John Hodgman:** It's the shortbread of podcasts.

**Jesse Thorn:** *Judge John Hodgman* was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by Bruce Roberts at ARP Studios in Charleston, South Carolina and our pal Joel Mann at WERU Community Radio in Orland, Maine. Our social media manager is Nattie Lopez. Our podcast is edited by AJ McKeon. Our video editor is Daniel Speer. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. And hey, if that sounds like a not a lot of names, it is! Please join Maximum Fun by going to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join)!

Now, Swift Justice, where we answer your small disputes with a quick judgment. Sean Isle on the Maximum Fun subreddit says, “My girlfriend insists on WhatsApp video calls. I would rather talk to her without video like a normal phone call, especially when I am in public.”

**John Hodgman:** WhatsApp video calls, Jesse, I think offer some what they call end-to-end encryption, perhaps? That's a—

**Jesse Thorn:** So, you think that they might be talking about their plans to invade the Capitol?

**John Hodgman:** I don't know! Look, I don't kink shame. No, that one I do. That one I do. That one I do kink shame. But in any case, as long as you're not walking down the street, yelling into your phone on speakerphone with it five feet away from your face, I'm pretty good with whatever. I don't like video calls either, so I'm gonna find in Sean Isles favor there. But I will say this, Bruce Roberts, who was our producer there in South Carolina—Bruce Roberts is a great name for a guy, also a terrific name for a dog. Can you imagine having a dog named Bruce Roberts?

**Jesse Thorn:** It would be a great dog.

**John Hodgman:** Great dog name. Alright, but I find in favor of Sean Isles. No thanks, WhatsApp. It's not for me. I'm very old.

**Jesse Thorn:** Can I say this, John?

[00:55:00]

You know, I read an article the other day that baseball players, Major League Baseball players, FaceTime—video FaceTime each other to chat in the clubhouse, surrounded by dozens of other people. They're chatting with other baseball players via FaceTime. It sounded like the wildest tableau I can imagine. Like a very handsome Hieronymus Bosch situation. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** I don't know why anyone would want the world to hear the other side of their conversation, whether it's a video call or a like a speaker phone call, where they're holding the phone five feet away from their face. That's not for me. Of course, I'm very old. Who am I to say? Oh, that's right, me, Judge John Hodgman. I'm the one who's saying that's bad. Put the phone up to your ear. I find in favor of Sean Isle.

**Jesse Thorn:** With the baseball players, it's a level of comfort in your underpants that I can't even begin to imagine, where you're projecting your underpants self into a third party's space and bringing in an underpants person from elsewhere.

**John Hodgman:** Boy, tell you—talk about immersion therapy to get over personal anxiety. I've been in my underpants a lot at the YMCA here in Maine lately. Did you know that, Joel Mann?

**Joel Mann:** I read about it, yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, I don't invite you to come by and check it out, but it's happening, and I'm feeling better about myself.

*(Joel whistles.)*

Hey, I said before, and many times, this is not an etiquette podcast. But why not? Why not have it be an etiquette podcast for once? I'm curious to know what disputes our listeners have around what we call quote/unquote “social norms”, so long as there still are a few social norms. Let's hear about it. Do you have a friend who's constantly late, and you want me to litigate them into timeliness? Is your loved one a last-minute plan canceller? And in fact, in terms of timeliness, we have listeners all over the world. I would love to hear—just write into [MaximumFun.org/jjho](http://MaximumFun.org/jjho) your dispute, but just tell me where you are. What is allowable lateness in your culture?

Here in Maine, Joel, if I invite you over—and don't worry, this will never happen. But if I invite you over to my house for dinner at 6PM, what time would you feel be okay to arrive by? Or what time would you get there by? Politely.

**Joel:** I would probably—15 minutes late, just to give you a little extra time.

**John Hodgman:** 15 minutes late. Yeah. I mean, that feels right in New England, which is a region of the United States. It might be different. In other parts of the country, in other parts of the world, I think it's vastly different. Let me know. I'm just curious to know.

Send in those disputes and that data that I requested at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). That's where the disputes go.

**Jesse Thorn:** And you know what? It doesn't matter what the dispute is about. I think we've proven on this cookie episode that we'll hear whatever you got.

Go to [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). Let's hear them! Send them to us, baby! Okay. That's it. 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!