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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, "Chew Process". Rae brings the case against their mom, Judy. Judy is adamant that you have to eat certain foods in certain orders. Rae says her mom's gut instinct is nothing but a bunch of (*blows a raspberry*). 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: "Sir, you are looking hero in my eyes. Your capability of expression of any topic is so amazing. Heart emoji, heart emoji, heart emoji."

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear the litigants in.

Jesse Thorn: Rae and Judy, 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 ate all of his foods simultaneously in 1986?

(*They swear.*)

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

John Hodgman: Yeah, I'm still working them through. Still working through all those Smarties and Necco wafers and lobster rolls and fried clams.

(*Jesse laughs.*)

I was only eating New England foods at the time. That's my theory of digestion. Only eat foods from your home region when you're 15 years old and never again. But let's leave my wackadoo theories behind and move on to the case. Judy and Rae, you may be seated for an immediate summary judgment in one of yours favors.

(*Chairs squeak.*)

Can either of you name the piece of culture that I referenced as I entered this courtroom?
Mom, we'll go with you first. Judy, what is your guess?

Judy: I think my only guess would be The Mountain Goats.

John Hodgman: Sure. That's an honest, good guess. And as this subject is digestion, mountain goats eat anything. So, that's pretty on point there.

Jesse Thorn: Mountain goats eat mountain tin cans.

John Hodgman: That's right. You know what I could have done? I could have given you a different one, which I'll give you in a minute. But first, Rae, can you guess this one?

Rae: I have no idea what that is. So, I'm going to say it is a comment on the Instagram page of Alton Brown, legendary chef.

John Hodgman: You know what, Rae? You're pretty close there. You're pretty close there. I'm going to put a circle on that one. I had quite a few good ones this week, and I had—it was a hard choice. I could have gone with this one from our friend, Mary Roach, from her book, *Gulp: Adventures on the Alimentary Canal*. “The human digestive tract is like the Amtrak line from Seattle to LA. Transit time is about 30 hours, and the scenery on the last leg is pretty monotonous.” That's pretty good.

(Jesse laughs.)

It's pretty good, Jesse. Mary's funny, right?

Jesse Thorn: Cool lady.

John Hodgman: Could've gone with this one. “I must always remain in hiding for an hour after meals. The food is visible inside me, until it is digested.” You know that one, Rae?

(They don't.)

Judy?

(She doesn't.)

Claude Rains in *The Invisible Man*. Gross, right?

Rae: Interesting!

John Hodgman: Totally gross.

Judy: Makes sense.

John Hodgman: Yeah. I have a feeling if the food is visible in his stomach for an hour, he's got—you know, we know that the digestive tract is like the Amtrak line from Seattle, LA. 30 hours. They're going to be able to see other stuff in the invisible man, not just the food in his stomach. Gross. And then I just realized I could have given you this one from my old friend Jonathan Coulton. (*Singing.*) “Love ain't no billy goat, doop boop doop-bup-a-doop boop. Love ain't got no horn doot, doot, doot. Love ain't don't eat no garbage. Love got regular human eyeballs. Love don't have devil's eyeballs! Love ain't no billy goat, that's for sure!”

Jesse Thorn: I think you've sung that one on the show before.

John Hodgman: I have sung it. It's “Love Ain't No Billy Goat” by Jonathan Coulton, which he wrote for the *Thrilling Adventure Hour*, about things that eat anything in any order, which is what brings us here today. But I didn't use any of those quotes, because I had to honor an internet comment—Rae, this is where you got close—from one at JoeBayerRahaman8429, top quote from two months ago on the video that comprised the entirety of my medical research on this subject that we're going to be talking about today. A seven-minute video from a medical student named Dr. (someday) Rex, because he's not a doctor yet. Dr. (someday) Rex, who schooled me in about seven minutes on the migrating motor complex of the stomach. Which may or may not come up again in this conversation, because it relates to the action of the stomach, which is what we're talking about today. But I did need to honor that person who was so moved by Dr. (someday) Rex that they wrote, “You are looking hero in my eyes” two months ago, especially since the video was made three years ago. This is a lonely person out there.

[00:05:00]

But as we dig into this layer cake of a case, I do also want to start by echoing. Dr. (someday) Rex in his own warning, quote, “This video and this podcast should not be taken as medical advice. Consult with your doctor if you have any health concerns. Views and opinions expressed herein are Dr. (someday) Rex's and mine and do not represent any organization or institution which we are associated with.” And I will note to you, the listener, that we will be talking today about food and dietary habits, so if that's something you don't feel like hearing about today, you can just go back into our back catalog and listen to another episode. We've got a lot of them. Please make sure you rate and review it wherever you get your podcasts. That really helps. And I will also anti-warn you that we will not be eating on mic today. So, you can listen to that just fine.

All guesses are wrong. So, we turn now to Rae, who brings this case to my court of fake justice. Rae, what is the nature of your complaint?

Rae: So, my mom has a lot of weird parent behaviors. A few of them are food based. And the last visit she had with us, she brought up a couple of them while she was with us, and it inspired me to write in. The first and main complaint is she has this belief—I don't think it's a scientific belief—that if you have multiple food items on your plate—

John Hodgman: And let's face it, I do.

Rae: (*Chuckles.*) Don't we all? You have to start with your least favorite item, eat all of it, move to the next item, eat all of it, and continue that way. Because the food layers in your stomach like a parfait, and you cannot mix it together.

John Hodgman: And so, Judy, you're moving from—you're moving from least favorite to most favorite.

(*Judy confirms.*)

So, you're nestling the least favorite down at the bottom by the pyloric valve. Thanks, Dr. (someday) Rex. And then you're creating a parfait of increasing favoritism towards your esophagus, correct?

(*Judy confirms.*)

What's going on? Where did you get this idea?

Judy: I've always eaten like that. I don't like to mix my food.

(*John concedes.*)

And I always like to start with the least favorite, because you want to save the best for last. And when my girls were little, they would ask me, and I would tell them, "Because your food goes down in layers." And they don't believe that, but I sent in a little bit of evidence that shows—that I pulled off the internet, so it has to be true—that shows that your food does in fact go down in layers.

John Hodgman: I am looking at the evidence you sent in. Exhibit A here is available on our show page at MaximumFun.org, as well as on our Instagram account, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman) on Instagram. And I see two images of a human stomach. And in the top image, in layers, we see an entire donut. Looks like a maple glazed. Then maybe—I don't know what the thing is. Is that supposed to be a hot dog? It's not a sandwich anyway.

Judy: I believe it is a hot dog.

John Hodgman: Alright. And then a whole pizza, and then what looks like a hamburger but without a hamburger in it, just maybe a slice of cheese between condiments. A famous condiment sandwich like I used to get at America's Best Deli on West 26th Street when I used to work at Writers House. This is science according to you?

Judy: Your honor, I looked that up on the internet. So, it has to be true.

John Hodgman: Uh-huh. Because the food here does not look digested. This isn't like going to a state fair and looking through a portal to one of the cow's many stomachs to see how the rumen, you know, is digested or whatever—to see the rumen at work. This is just an image

that has cartoon pictures of foods inside a cartoon picture of a stomach. So, where'd you get it?

Judy: Off the internet, but I know I shouldn't have picked that picture. That was terrible.

John Hodgman: Well, there's another picture below it that you sent in. Which again, seems to be a cartoon picture of a stomach, this time full of tomatoes and bell peppers and a whole head of cauliflower.

Jesse Thorn: For health.

Judy: You have to have your vegetables.

John Hodgman: What am I looking at? What are you seeking to prove with this? Are you sure you didn't manufacture this evidence, ma'am?

Judy: No, sir, I did not. But it was the only thing that I could find that would justify my position.

(Jesse laughs.)

John Hodgman: I would love to know—I don't know what search engine you use, but what terms did you use to search for this?

Judy: I searched in—

Jesse Thorn: Internal parfait.

Judy: “Food layered in your stomach”.

John Hodgman: Food layered in your stomach, uh-huh.

Judy: And then there was a whole bunch of terrible pictures that just showed bad things. And there was one little picture that showed one of mine. So, I clicked on that, and it gave me other examples of that.

John Hodgman: I'm not seeing the bad things that you saw. Maybe I have safe stomach selected on my search engine choice.

(Judy agrees with a laugh.)

But I don't see the thing. Oh, wait, hang on. It took me a little ways down to find an image that does look like yours.

[00:10:00]

A cartoon of a bunch of different whole foods, including like a whole wheel of Swiss cheese and a whole half of an avocado layered into a stomach. And this is from a website called Amway Now—Amway, a very famous multi-level marketing organization. So, I'm not sure that this is scientific at all. Do you have a degree in science of any kind?

(She doesn't.)

But you did send in—

Judy: My medical degree? I did graduate. That was also off the internet.

John Hodgman: Uh-huh. This looks like a screen grab of a diploma from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, in which you have scrawled your name in using your finger on your phone.

(Judy confirms.)

And it's not even an MD. It's a degree in the business of medicine.

(They laugh.)

I happen to be noticing right now.

Judy: That is where I went wrong.

Jesse Thorn: That's what happens when you get your medical degree by searching for “inside parfait, whole pizza”.

(Judy agrees.)

John Hodgman: Rae, is it safe to say that your mother is a liar?

Rae: Oh, she's definitely a liar. I don't think she believes that it is scientifically true. I think that when she was a child, she had that very childish idea that your food should not touch each other. Which is fine. I have a toddler. I get it. But to justify that idea, she created this—

John Hodgman: When I was a child, I layered in my stomach like a child. But when I became a grown up, I pooped that concept away with other childish things.

Rae: But alas, she did not poop the concept. She continues, and she won't make other people do it. She does it on her own. But if you bring it up, she preaches it like pure truth.

John Hodgman: We haven't had merch in a while, Rae, but now I'm picturing like a “nevertheless she persisted” t-shirt that just says, “alas, she did not poop the concept”.

(They laugh.)

Jesse Thorn: I'm imagining like a first draft of *The Velveteen Rabbit*. It's about letting go of keeping your food separate in your stomach.

John Hodgman: Rae, you mentioned—or Judy mentioned—that that your mom was visiting you. Where do you all live?

Rae: So, currently my family is an Air Force family. We're stationed in Idaho. So, my mom comes to visit us as often as she can, mostly to see my child. As soon as I had a child, she forgot about her own child.

John Hodgman: Congratulations.

(Rae thanks him.)

Congratulations to you both. Both on having a child and forgetting about your own child in favor of your grandchild. And you're visiting from somewhere in Florida, right, Judy?

Judy: Yes, I'm in Tallahassee right now, but I live in Lynnhaven, which is right outside of Panama City, Florida.

John Hodgman: But were you in the Air Force then?

Judy: I was, yes. For four years.

John Hodgman: Oh, okay. Excellent. And then it says here that you worked in corrections?

Judy: I went to prison for 31 years.

John Hodgman: And when were you released?

Judy: I was paroled July of 2017.

John Hodgman: Soooo, I could send you back?

(Judy laughs.)

If you're on probation?

Judy: *(Laughing.)* I'm done.

John Hodgman: I could un-retire you.

Judy: Oh, that'd be terrible.

John Hodgman: Rae, how long has your mom been telling you that food layers in your stomach?

Rae: Oh, for as long as I can remember.

John Hodgman: Do you remember the first time?

Rae: I don't remember the first time. I remember it being brought up as a joke probably in my high school years. My sister and I would bother her about it.

John Hodgman: What's her favorite food and what's her least favorite food?

Rae: Oh my goodness. Ah, that's a good question!

John Hodgman: Maybe you never even noticed or cared what your own mother liked to eat, so busy were you making fun of her?

Rae: I mean, as her child, it's my obligation to make fun of her, just as it's her obligation to be a weird mom to me. She has very particular ideas—

John Hodgman: You have a good concept of your respective duties.

(They laugh.)

Jesse Thorn: It's a little something called family values.

Rae: She has very particular ideas on how to eat a turkey sandwich perfectly, so I would rank that up there.

John Hodgman: Let me hear it. Not from you, Judy. I want to hear it from Rae.

Rae: White toast. Butter. Turkey. That's it.

(John "woah"s and Jesse cackles.)

Oh. Salt. Salt. I'm sorry. I forgot the salt. Salt.

Jesse Thorn: Salt?!

(Rae confirms.)

I love this. I love this for you, I love this for Elwood Blues from *The Blues Brothers*. I just love it overall.

John Hodgman: When you were in the Air Force, Judy, did you spend some time stationed in Paris, France?

Judy: I did not, but I did spend some time in Turkey.

John Hodgman: Okay. Very tenuous connection there.

(Jesse laughs and Judy agrees.)

[00:15:00]

Are you telling me that the Turks in Turkey eat their turkey with butter only?

Judy: I've never seen the Turks eat a turkey.

John Hodgman: I was trying to buy you some cover there, because in France—I mean, they have mayonnaise, to be sure. They're not savages. But the most popular sandwich condiment in France is butter. Beurre, pain, sel, and dinde, which is turkey. Sounds like, actually, a sandwich that I want to try, Rae. So, I think you kind of foiled your case that time.

Rae: Well, I eat it in a very similar manner, but instead of butter, a very nice spread of mayonnaise instead, because turkey tends to be dry.

John Hodgman: Well, wait one second, Judy. If you're eating a turkey sandwich, however it is, aren't you messing with the layers? Because you've got bread, turkey, butter, and salt all going down the pipe at the same time. How's that layer out?

Judy: You are 100% correct. You are 100% correct.

(John thanks her.)

And the only time I would have turkey sandwiches—Thanksgiving or Christmas. And what I've gathered from that is—

John Hodgman: The period of time when science doesn't apply.

Judy: Right. When you do not eat your food the conventional way of going in layers, you're eating at Thanksgiving.

John Hodgman: I would say the Judy way. The Judy convention.

Judy: Exactly, the correct way. You're eating at Thanksgiving.

(Jesse giggles.)

You're eating at Christmas, and you're not eating the way you're supposed to. What do you have to do? You have to undo your pants. You have to wear sweatpants, because of you not eating it—that's why you have to undo your pants.

John Hodgman: Those of you who are not watching on video, when Judy was explaining because you were not eating it correctly, she said, "Because you're not eating it," and then she used her hand to make a layer of steps down or a series of steps down, like layers, right? So, you're saying that Thanksgiving, Christmas, those are times of dietary indulgence. That's a time when you set aside the Judy convention of the layers, and you'll just go ahead and eat a sandwich. Instead of presumably the rest of the year, when you separate out the bread, the butter, the salt, and the turkey, and you eat them in order.

What would be the order in which you would eat them from least favorite to most favorite?

Judy: *(Sighs.)* Salt would have to be first.

John Hodgman: Least favorite?

Judy: Least favorite would be salt, out of those four.

John Hodgman: You've lost me.

Judy: But your honor, may I ask you something?

John Hodgman: I'll allow it.

Judy: Thank you. When something happens to somebody, and they have to go to the coroner, and he says, "Okay, I can see 27 hours prior to this, they had scrambled eggs. 15 hours prior to this, they had an apple." And they can determine exactly what you ate, almost to the minute, it has to be because of layers.

John Hodgman: I'm not sure I am initiated into your definition of going to the corner.

Jesse Thorn: No, going to the coroner, Judge Hodgman! The coroner.

John Hodgman: Oh! *(Laughing.)* I see, okay, coroner. I was quite confused.

Jesse Thorn: Although, there's a coroner down at my corner.

John Hodgman: When someone has to go to the corner—I thought you were talking about some very special form of punishment in your family or in the Air Force or in your correctional institution.

Jesse Thorn: Down on Figueroa Boulevard by my house, John, there's a coroner there who's willing to do live coronering.

(Judy laughs.)

John Hodgman: You're saying that a coroner performing an autopsy is able to determine foods in layers as it's been moving through the GI tract.

Judy: I believe so.

John Hodgman: And what is your evidence for that? I mean, I'm not saying you're wrong, but I'm not friends with a coroner, nor do I have one on speed dial.

Judy: Nor am I. Just from everything that I've seen on public television, it has to be true.

John Hodgman: Rae, do you know any coroners? Can you refute this?

Rae: I do not know any. My science is not that of the human body. So.

John Hodgman: Okay, but Judy, you're advocating eating layers based on preference, not based on dietary health, as far as I can tell. What happens to you when you don't eat your food in layers? When you have one of your wonderful turkey butter sandwiches?

Judy: That's when my stomach just, you know, feels like you have to undo your pants. You got to get some more room in there. You have to make more room, because you did not eat it correctly.

John Hodgman: You feel a little uncomfortable.

(Judy confirms.)

Jesse Thorn: Do you ever make like a recipe inside yourself?

Judy: *(Laughs.)* I've never done that. That would be interesting.

Jesse Thorn: Like, you eat a cup of yogurt and then a cup of granola and then a cup of yogurt and then a cup of granola and then some whipped cream?

John Hodgman: Do you ever whip up an ambrosia salad with chunks of pineapple in there?

Judy: *(Laughs.)* No, but I think I should. I'm going to try. I'm going to give that a shot.

[00:20:00]

John Hodgman: Really hard to float the pineapple in the Jell-O. Rae, what do you think happens to food during digestion?

Rae: Probably what everybody thinks happens—that you eat it, it gets mixed up, and it continues on its path. The stomach is a moving organ. That's why it growls when you're hungry, because its walls are rubbing against each other. So, once you have food in there, it's all mixed together. There's no parfait. You wouldn't get an x-ray or a different scan and see a cake of what you've eaten.

John Hodgman: Well, Judy might for fun. But you might not like what you see, Judy. You might see what you found when you Google image searched layers and stomach.

(Judy agrees.)

All I know about this comes from Dr. (someday) Rex, MD-to-be, from three years ago when he was talking about the migrating motor complex or the migratory motor complex as it is sometimes known. And what I learned from the seven-minute video, Rae, is more or less what you said is true, based on this unlicensed doctor, non-doctor. But he was someone who has been taking medical classes. And I'm talking about real MD school, not business of medicine school. Sorry, Johns Hopkins. Which is the pyloric valve closes, and all the food as it comes in just gets all mixed up together, and then it lets the mixture through, bit by bit, until you have been fasting for a period of time. Which is to say you go to sleep, typically. The long period of hours without eating, that's when that migratory motor complex kicks in. And that is a three or four phase function of the enteric nervous system.

But basically, what it does is it sweeps the stomach of everything it couldn't digest during the regular period. And we're talking about stuff that's like undigestible. Like fiber that's not digestible, stuff that can't get through that pyloric valve during the normal thing. But he did also say that typically what moves through the pyloric valve—it goes in this order. Liquids, carbs, proteins, and then fats. So, it's a little contradictory there, because that is a little bit of layer, you know what I mean? But that doesn't mean to say that if you eat an apple, the apple sits at the bottom while if you then have your turkey butter sandwich that sits over the apple. It all gets mixed up and the water goes through first is my understanding from Dr. Someday.

Now, if you're an actual medical doctor or a professional coroner, I know you're going to write in anyway. So, you might as well start doing it now.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: Rae, have you ever tried eating in layers?

Rae: I'm sure I have. Not consciously, not trying to follow the Judy way of eating.

John Hodgman: Ah, but that would suggest that Judy, your mother, while advocating for the Judy convention, never forced it upon you. Is that true or not true?

Rae: That is true. She has never forced the convention upon anybody that I've witnessed.

John Hodgman: So, what is your standing in this? Why not just let your mom eat the way she wants to eat?

Rae: I am totally happy to let my mom eat the way she wants to eat. Everybody gets to do what they like, as long as it doesn't hurt other people. The problem is, if you bring it up or if she brings it up, she will act like it is pure scientific truth. Which I just want her to admit that it is not scientifically true, and it's just her weird idea.

John Hodgman: Does she have any other weird ideas that she tries to bluff you into thinking are truth?

Rae: My mom has a variety of weird ideas.

John Hodgman: Let's hear it! Let's hear it. Least favorite to most favorite, please. I want to layer them down.

(Jesse laughs.)

Rae: Well, another weird food—not so much an idea, but a pattern that I've witnessed. My entire life, she has said without hesitation she does not like coffee. But the last time she was at my house when this was brought up, she bought a can of coffee to use at my house, and we went through a coffee drive through where she asked me to order her a coffee. So, she drinks and enjoys coffee, but then says she doesn't like it.

John Hodgman: Mom-Judy has raised her hand. I will allow your question or your response.

Judy: Thank you, your honor. Coffee smells amazing.

John Hodgman: Another t-shirt, another banger.

Judy: Coffee, bacon, amazing. They smell amazing. But just to drink coffee? No. If I get a coffee, it has so much cream and sugar in it that you can't consider it coffee.

John Hodgman: Also, you're messing up your layers, because you have the coffee layer and the cream layer and the sugar layer.

Judy: I don't really consider liquids layers.

John Hodgman: I really do. And I encourage you to drink your coffee this way from now on. Get a black coffee, take a drink, then open up one of those little tubs of Half & Half, shoot it, and then put some sugar on the back of your hand and lick it like that. That's the best way to enjoy coffee.

Judy: I shall try that.

John Hodgman: You're saying that you get coffee for the smell more than the taste.

Judy: No, very rarely do I get coffee. I mean, once in a great while. When I was at her house, I was drinking these protein drinks, and they have a café latte one that if you mix it with coffee, it doesn't really taste like coffee, but it's warm. You know, it's just kind of like hot chocolate.

John Hodgman: I, honestly, in a conversation about layering semi-digested food into the stomach, I didn't think you were going to repulse me with mixing protein shakes with coffee.

Jesse Thorn: I like the idea that you have completely oppositional ideas about food and beverages.

[00:30:00]

So, with food, nothing gets mixed. With beverages, only the craziest mix I've ever heard of.

(John laughs.)

Judy: That is true. Let me ask you guys—do you guys have kids?

John Hodgman: Yes.

(Jesse confirms.)

We both do. We all do, here.

Judy: When my girls were little—I have two girls. When they were little—I'm sure you guys have been through the same thing if you have daughters, they would make something. “Oh mom, try it, try it. It's delicious!” And it's the worst thing you've ever tasted in your life. But you have to, because they're little and you love them, because they're good tax write-offs. So, you have that bond with them.

John Hodgman: You're saying they make something disgusting, some little food potion or mixture or admixture of like—

Jesse Thorn: Raw eggs, red food coloring.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Chocolate chip cookie dough and paprika and maple syrup or something.

Rae: I can give a good example. I remember heating over the stove Coca Cola, black pepper, and 2% milk.

John Hodgman: That sounds like a terrific holiday drink on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I feel like that one might catch me by surprise, and I'd like it.

Rae: You never know.

Judy: As my kids got older, Rae—we would go through drive throughs. Where you can get, you know, different kinds of drinks.

John Hodgman: I'm familiar with the term.

Judy: And she would be like, “Oh, mom, try it. Try it. It's so good.” Same thing as when she was little; it was disgusting.

John Hodgman: Judy, what is your point other than Rae is disgusting, with this topic?

Judy: Oh, Rae is not. Rae is not, but the drinks that she gets are. And if I got a coffee, I would get like a caramel Frappuccino. That's not really a coffee. That's like a slushie.

John Hodgman: I don't disagree with you, but I fail to see the point of your argument, other than saying that your daughter made disgusting things when she was young. What is the point in terms of the layers?

Judy: I have no point.

John Hodgman: (*Laughing.*) I appreciate your honesty.

Judy: I have no point.

Jesse Thorn: I liked it better when the coffee was for huffing.

John Hodgman: Yeah, I thought we were getting somewhere with there are just some foods that you need to smell.

Judy: I do have a good coffee story, though.

John Hodgman: Alright, I'll decide. Go ahead.

Judy: Okay. So, when I was working at the prison. You have inmates that work for you.

John Hodgman: I'm just going to interrupt you just for one second. Now, I didn't get an MFA in creative writing. I applied to some programs. I decided I preferred to stay and work in book publishing in New York City rather than go and study. But I took some really good writing classes from great teachers like Don Faulkner and Lee K. Abbott, both of whom are no longer alive, I'm sad to say, but whose lessons live with me today. One of them being specificity is the soul of narrative. The other one being, if you want to start a story, "when I used to work at the prison"? Great way of starting. Immediate. I'm like, okay, I'm listening!

(They laugh.)

Judy: So, when I used to work at the prison, you have inmates that work for you. So, you kind of like just supervise. That time of my life, I only drank Mountain Dew. So.

(Jesse cackles.)

John Hodgman: This is already fast tracked for a Nobel Prize in literature. Yes.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I have the *New Yorker* on the phone. They're taking dictation.

Judy: I'm sitting at my desk, writing down stuff for the day. I had a cup of coffee. My inmates are just—you know, they're working, doing their stuff. I have another cup of coffee. Third time I went to get a cup of coffee, my inmate's like, "Oh my goodness, you're pregnant."

I'm like what did you just say to me?

He's like, "You're pregnant. My sister never drinks coffee. When she drank coffee, then she found out she was pregnant."

Sure enough, I was pregnant with Rae's little sister. That's my only coffee story.

John Hodgman: So, you normally would just drink Mountain Dew. But then the inmates who are under your supervision noticed that you were drinking coffee. You weren't even thinking about it yourself.

Judy: I wasn't even thinking about it.

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, to be clear, at this time she only drank Mountain Dew.

John Hodgman: Right, right, exactly.

Judy: Never drank coffee.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Well, you know what they say. When you're having a child, layer some coffee on top of it.

Jesse Thorn: Rae, you mentioned that your mother has other odd behavioral patterns. Coffee is one of them. What else?

Rae: Yes. Well, a related odd behavioral pattern is that when she meets people for the first time, they ask what she does, where she's from, she will say, "I just got out of prison. I was there for 30 years."

John Hodgman: Yeah, I've heard it.

Rae: And I mean, yep, you guys heard it too.

John Hodgman: I saw that one in real time,

Rae: A small percentage of people will instantly get it and find it funny.

[00:35:00]

The other half will usually be very just blindsided and speechless and not know how to respond to that until she finally breaks in, "I worked there. I retired."

John Hodgman: Yeah, I could see how that might be a little disorienting or confusing. Let me ask, Judy, who are you saying this to? New friends and acquaintances?

Judy: Not new acquaintances, but just people that Rae would know.

(Jesse cackles.)

Her husband's family.

(John affirms with amusement.)

But—and the reason I do that—I didn't start that. When I retired, and I retired and moved back to Florida. My dad lives right outside of Tampa. I'd go to church with him or whatever. He's been going to the same church since 1977 when he retired. And he would introduce me to people in his church, and he's like, "This is my daughter. She just got out of prison." So, that's where I got it from. It's because my dad—

John Hodgman: Oooh. It's a weird dad thing.

Judy: He's got a great sense of humor.

John Hodgman: That got passed down to a weird—and I say this with affection, a weird daughter/mom thing. Gotcha, gotcha, gotcha. That's pretty good.

Judy: He thought it was hilarious. He still thinks it's hilarious.

John Hodgman: Why didn't you bring your granddad to this court, Rae? Because we could have had a real thing going.

Rae: I mean, I would have. Because I, myself, display some weird parent attributes. So, we could have had a trifecta.

John Hodgman: So, it's like a generational curse.

(Rae agrees.)

Judy: I think she was scared to, because that's exactly the way he eats his turkey sandwiches. White toast, butter, and salt.

John Hodgman: Yeah, but the two of you doing it doesn't make it a law.

(They laugh.)

It doesn't even make it a trend! You need three.

Judy: Don't tell my dad that! *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: No, I understand.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, if you want it to be a trend and get into the *New York Times*, there's going to need to be three of you and you're going to need to do it in Park Slope.

John Hodgman: That's right.

Judy: *(Under her breath.)* Darn.

John Hodgman: Rae, does your mom have any other little weirdsies around food in particular, besides the layering?

Rae: Well, she is very, very particular about food. Getting her to try new things is absolutely like pulling teeth. Getting her to try a new dinner, a new addition to something, a new brand of a product. It seems like she followed her father's steps in terms of what food she likes, what product she buys, and has never deviated.

John Hodgman: What do you call your grandfather? PopPop? Grampy? Granddad? Grandsie? Scott?

Rae: Peepaw.

John Hodgman: Peepaw?!

(Jesse cackles.)

Rae: No, it's Grandpa.

(Jesse and John make sounds of disappointment.)

Peepaw would be great, though.

John Hodgman: Peepaw is very good. I also like Scott. But what are Scott's brands and what are your mom's brands? We talk about brands now in the podcast, so you can just say them. Maybe we'll get a sponsorship out of it.

Rae: For instance, she'll come to visit my house and wanna make a recipe. She won't even bother checking my fridge. She will just go to the store and buy, let's say, an entire new jar of mayonnaise, because she knows that I like to try different ones. And she has to have a very particular one for whatever she is making.

John Hodgman: What's your mayonnaise, ma'am?

Judy: Best Foods, I'll buy Hellman's.

Jesse Thorn: Those are the same.

(John and Rae agree.)

Judy: I will not buy Generic. I buy the name brands. Rae does not.

John Hodgman: Rae, you're rocking generic mayonnaise out there in Idaho?

Rae: Uh, no. I will buy a Duke's. I will buy a nice one with some avocado oil or sea salt.

John Hodgman: Yeah. What I was thinking is probably more along your lines there. Alternate, upscale mayonnaises.

Jesse Thorn: I could see you buying a kewpie mayonnaise for the umami.

Rae: I used a kewpie mayonnaise last night.

John Hodgman: Yeah. You have to acknowledge, Rae, that these mayonnaises—like all mayonnaises—are all very delicious, but they are different.

Rae: Oh, they're definitely different. But if I have a regular—just a mayonnaise for a sandwich at home, full jar, ready to go, she doesn't need to go buy one of a different brand just because the potato salad will taste slightly different, which it probably will not.

John Hodgman: Well, I'm bringing out my big gavel. I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision, Rae. I strongly disagree with you. Preliminary ruling against you. (*Thumps his gavel three times.*) Mayonnaise counts. You got to get your mayonnaise you like. Sorry about that.

Judy: Thank you, your honor. Thank you. Thank you.

John Hodgman: Any other brands that are—I mean, to me, that's a very rational brand loyalty. Because all of those mayonnaises are different. I'm not even an aspiring medical doctor. Do you know what I mean? But I'm certainly not Dr. Someday Mayonnaise Expert. I am Dr. Now Mayonnaise Expert. Years and years of experience, Rae, with extreme prejudice I find against you in this one area.

[00:40:00]

And frankly, I'm thinking of just throwing this whole thing out of my court.

Rae: Understandable.

John Hodgman: You've disappointed me. I like you. But you've disappointed me. But you can redeem yourself by finding a brand loyalty that is perhaps not so rational and colloidal as mayonnaise.

Rae: Of course. It's really hard to think of one off the top of my head because—

Judy: Ketchup.

Rae: Ketchup, sure.

John Hodgman: Are you saying that your child, Rae, has non-Heinz ketchup in the house, Judy?

Judy: Sometimes. I have been to her house where there has not been Heinz ketchup.

John Hodgman: And you are Heinz, I presume, straight down the middle.

Judy: Everybody is.

John Hodgman: Yeah. You know, like that famous folk character, Tallahassee Heinz. That's why it's good.

(Judy agrees.)

If you're in Tallahassee, go to Heinz. Yeah.

Judy: Same with vegetables.

John Hodgman: Go ahead. What do you mean?

Judy: You can't get the generic canned vegetables. They weren't rinsed as well. They always have that little bit of gritty sand.

John Hodgman: Rae, why is your mom beating up on you like this?

Rae: I think she just enjoys it. I mean—

Judy: That's true.

(John laughs.)

What are kids for?

Rae: She does regularly tell people I had children for the tax break and to bother them. I remember from a very young age her putting on a Halloween mask and going around to the back windows of the house to scare us. And her entire outlook of parenthood is bothering, in a fun way.

John Hodgman: Mm-hm, mm-hm. Like a little bit of grit in the oyster that causes the pearl to form, right?

(Judy confirms.)

Or a little bit of soil in the can of pees that just give it a little bit of roughage that makes it go down easier when it's layered in the right place of your stomach. That's called parenting. In an extremely mixed metaphor, which I suppose you don't approve of, Judy, because you don't mix metaphors, do you? You put them down in layers.

Judy: In my defense, I was raised in the military. My dad was military, so we moved all over the place. And I was raised by my dad and three older brothers. I was the youngest. I was the only girl.

John Hodgman: Were you teased much then?

(Judy confirms.)

Right. Did your dad and your three brothers—did they like to explain how the world worked to you with incredible authority?

(Judy confirms with a laugh.)

Do you ever want to take that out on someone else, after it was foisted upon you?

Judy: I did! *(Laughs.)* Rae and her sister.

John Hodgman: Right. And no regrets.

Judy: No regrets.

John Hodgman: We talked about goats earlier and how they eat everything and without any consideration to the order in which it goes into their billy goat maw. Speaking of goats, do you believe in this layering thing, or are you just trying to get Rae's goat?

Judy: I think the most fun that I have out of it is getting her goat and knowing that she has a little one that I can just fill his little brain with all the things that drive his mother crazy.

John Hodgman: Wow! That's quite a grand parental mission that hasn't been expressed so openly on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast before.

Judy: They told me to be honest, so.

John Hodgman: Rae, we can't fault your mom's honesty, at least.

Rae: That's true. That's true. She is—her mission statement is out there, ready for the world to hear.

John Hodgman: How do you—do you feel that your goat has gotten got sufficiently and that she should stop getting your goat at this point?

Rae: Well, I wouldn't say—I wouldn't order her to stop completely. I just want her to confess that she is just doing it for a laugh and that she doesn't believe it's actually true.

(John “wow”s.)

Judy: Your honor, her biggest thing is for you to tell me that I'm never allowed to tell my grandson that his food goes down in layers. That's what she's scared of.

John Hodgman: Thank you for robbing your child of their agency and speaking their mind for them.

(Judy laughs.)

Rae, just for confirmation—since your mom has already, obviously, expressed your point of view for you—is that what you would have me order in this case?

Rae: I wouldn't have that be a complete order, because I do see the value in jokes and pranks and fun in good nature. I do have a child whose brain is like a sponge, and you have to be careful what you say, otherwise they will believe it and repeat it. So, I wouldn't say that she has to completely stop with the silliness, but maybe just don't hold it as such high truth.

John Hodgman: Hm. I have a question to ask before I go into my chambers. This goes back a little bit. Judy, Rae says that your process is to eat least favorite to most favorite. So, give me a sense of what your least favorite foods are, and which are your most favorite foods.

[00:45:00]

Judy: Well, least favorite that I will not eat at all.

John Hodgman: Not even as a base layer?

Judy: Oh no, no. Mushrooms and fish.

John Hodgman: If you haven't had a good mushroom fish parfait, you are missing out, ma'am.

Jesse Thorn: That's mushroom, fish, granola, yogurt, strawberries.

Rae: The classics.

Judy: Yes, yes. The classics.

John Hodgman: But if you were to eat your turkey and butter sandwich in the layer system, least to most favorite ingredient, what would it be? Just so I understand. I just want to picture you deconstructing it.

Judy: The toast, the butter, and the turkey. I would eat the turkey first, because it is dry. And then probably the toast, and then what kid hasn't just ate butter to eat butter when they were younger? So, I would probably eat the butter last.

John Hodgman: You're talking to a kid who ate a bowl of mayonnaise.

Jesse Thorn: In one of your formative experiences in life, I think.

John Hodgman: I think about it every day. I think about doing it every day. I live with it every day.

Judy: But you did mention something earlier that you eat or ate when you were younger, and it is still one of my favorite food groups to this day. I have a bag in my cabinet at home as we speak.

John Hodgman: What is it?!

Judy: Smarties.

John Hodgman: Oh, I was just trying to think of something. I don't like them.

Judy: Oh, really? Oh, they're amazing.

John Hodgman: No, I don't like any sweets.

Jesse Thorn: Smarties are good. I'm with you on Smarties. I really like Smarties.

(Judy thanks him.)

People act like they're one of those old timey candies that's not anything like Necco wafers, which are legitimately a little bit gross.

John Hodgman: How dare you?

Jesse Thorn: I think Smarties are good.

Judy: Smarties are amazing.

John Hodgman: The only Necco wafer I eat is the black one, licorice.

Rae: I have taken my child to multiple parades for various holidays and town events. And when they throw candy out on the streets and all the kids go and, you know, put it in their pockets. When you walk home, the only candy left on the sidewalk is Smarties. So, it is a low tier candy.

Jesse Thorn: They're probably leaving it for me.

Judy: Or me.

John Hodgman: Yeah, I was gonna say, your mom's following the parade with a dustpan and broom, just sweeping up every Smartie.

Judy: All the Smarties.

John Hodgman: Did you learn the layer system from your dad, Judy?

Judy: I believe so, because growing up in the military, we were on a budget. The only vegetables I can remember eating growing up until we got back into the States was canned corn, canned green beans, canned peas. You know, so we would have meatloaf and peas. And mashed potatoes.

John Hodgman: And do you think that the layer system might have been a technique to get you to clean your plate?

Judy: Oh, we definitely cleaned our plate before we got up.

John Hodgman: Right. But like, eat the thing you like the least first, get it over with, and then go forward.

(Judy agrees.)

Because you're not making any medical claims here.

Judy: No, I am not.

John Hodgman: Other than your anecdotal claim that when you eat a sandwich like a normal sandwich, you feel a little fuller than if you pick it apart and deconstruct your turkey butter sandwich.

Judy: Yeah, or if you just overeat, because it's good.

John Hodgman: And if I were to rule in your favor, Judy, what would you have me rule?

Judy: That Rae would have to admit that, as I've known all along, her mother's right. She's always right.

John Hodgman: It says here that you are right on all accounts, specifically?

Judy: Pretty much everything.

John Hodgman: Alright, I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'm going to go into my chambers, and I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

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

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

Rae, how are you feeling about your chances?

Rae: You know, I don't know. I came into it slightly confident. But listening to a previous episode, the judge himself said that food layered in your stomach like a parfait. I can't

remember which episode that was, but it was said. So, I don't know. My chances might be pretty low.

Jesse Thorn: Thanks for not bringing up that precedent until now!

Rae: I mean, that's pretty harsh evidence against my case, so.

Jesse Thorn: Judy, how are you feeling?

Judy: I'm feeling kinda iffy. I feel pretty good about the name brand food choices. I think I'll get ruled in my favor on that one. Not too sure about the coffee one. Not too sure about the layering. Although, I did see a movie where two great scholars did say that things do have layers.

Jesse Thorn: What movie was that, Judy?

Judy: *Shrek*. Ogres have layers. Onions. Parfaits.

Jesse Thorn: The parfait part was implied. (*Chuckles.*)

Judy: If you can't trust Shrek and Donkey, who can you trust?

Jesse Thorn: Are there other things you're trying to convince your grandchild of that are obviously false? Are you trying to trick this two-year-old into thinking that *Quincy, M.D.* is on public television?

[00:50:00]

Judy: (*Laughs.*) Not yet, because like Rae said, he's just a little over two. But when he gets older, and I can kidnap him for, you know, little times out of the year, he'll go home with just a brain full of knowledge from his grandma.

Rae: Well, my mom and grandfather in cahoots did convince my little sister that, in Florida, they only drank chicken milk instead of cow milk.

Jesse Thorn: (*Cackles delightedly.*) Oh, that rules!

Judy: She was like six or seven and believed it.

Jesse Thorn: I had mixed feelings about who should win this case until I heard about the chicken milk! Now I'm all in. I'm supposed to be objective. This chicken milk thing is blowing my mind. Well, 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: Bright, triumphant synth.

Jeremy Bent: The Eurovision Song Contest. Hundreds of millions of people watch it every year.

Dimitry Pompée: It played a part in a democratic revolution in Portugal. It introduced the world to Riverdance, and it launched Celine Dion's career!

Oscar Montoya: But you might have never watched it.

Jeremy: It's got so much history and so many storylines that it can feel overwhelming to get into.

Oscar: Mm-hm. It's like a *Real Housewives* season, but everyone's a better singer.

Dimitry: Well, sometimes. But that's where we come in! I'm Dimitry Pompée.

Oscar: I'm Oscar Montoya.

Jeremy: And I'm Jeremy Bent, and we're the hosts of *Eurovangelists*.

Dimitry: If you're new to Eurovision, we'll tell you everything you need to know to start enjoying the world's most important song competition.

Oscar: And if you're already a fan, we'll dive deep on its wildest moments—like when Ireland sends a turkey puppet to sing for them.

Dimitry: *Eurovangelists!*

Oscar: New episodes every Thursday!

Jeremy: On [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) or wherever you get your podcasts.

(Music ends.)

Promo:

Music: Exciting rock music.

Jordan Crucchiola: I'm Jordan Crucchiola, host of *Feeling Seen*, where we start by asking our guests just one question: what movie character made you feel seen?

Speaker 1: I knew exactly what it was!

Speaker 2: Clementine from *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.

Speaker 3: Joy Wang slash Jobu Tupaki.

Jordan: That one question launches amazing conversations about their lives, the movies they love, and about the past, present, and future of entertainment.

Speaker 4: Roy in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

Speaker 5: I worry about what this might say about me, but I've brought Tracy Flick in the film *Election*.

Jordan: So, if you like movies, diverse perspectives, and great conversations, check us out!

Speaker 6: Oof, this is real.

Jordan: New episodes of *Feeling Seen* drop every week on MaximumFun.org.

(Music fades out.)

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, we're taking a break from the case. Let's talk about what we've got going on. What's going on with you?

John Hodgman: First of all, I wanted to say thank you to everyone who came out to San Francisco Sketch Fest and saw us at the Palace of Fine Arts. What a wonderful night of fun and justice.

Jesse Thorn: Especially my mom. You know, my mom texted me right before the show. And she said, "Did you ask strangers to have fights with me on *Judge John Hodgman*?"

(They laugh.)

I did. I did. I had to try and explain that we were looking for—it was a whole thing, you know?

John Hodgman: We as a podcast won't be hitting the road again for a little while. We'll certainly let you know when we do with plenty of advance notice so that we can see you again. What fun! I am doing a couple of things out in the world that you may want to know about. One is the return of the Solid Sound Festival to Western Massachusetts. That's Wilco's—the band's—big arts and music festival. Two big shows from Wilco surrounded by all kinds of other incredible art projects and bands and performances. And as has happened over the past several years, I have hosted the comedy stage. We're going to make a big announcement of our comedy lineup very soon, but there's no reason why you can't go over to SolidSoundFestival.com and look up the current lineup and get your tickets now, because it's a really good time.

And if you'd like to meet me face to face on the high seas, I have a special offer for you. Yes, I mentioned before that I am rejoining the Jonathan Coulton cruise, the JoCo cruise, departing from Fort Lauderdale and going throughout the Caribbean in March. And I have a special offer. If you book your cruise now at JoCoCruise.com and use code "hodgman24", that's my name—H-O-D-G-M-A-N-24—at checkout, "hodgman24", they will send me a note saying that you did it, and then I will play Scrabble with you on board the ship.

(Jesse “wow”s.)

Yeah. I will have a game of Scrabble with you. I would do Yahtzee as well. I would do Scrabble. I would do Yahtzee. I would do Monopoly, deal.

Jesse Thorn: Uno?

John Hodgman: I will not do Uno.

Jesse Thorn: Sorry?

John Hodgman: I will not do—these are not games.

Jesse Thorn: What if it's pop-o-matic Sorry?

John Hodgman: Maybe I would do pop-o-matic Sorry. I'm not gonna do Spellcast! the Get Along or any of those with you, 'cause they're too complicated.

[00:55:00]

But I will play Scrabble with you onboard the ship, one-on-one or three-on-one, depending on how many are in your party. And I'll do it for each person who books using “hodgman24” when they check out at JoCoCruise.com. And I don't know how many there'll be, but I'm very happy to do that, because it's something I can do and enjoy. And I haven't been playing Scrabble that much, so don't think I'm going to be very good at it. You'll probably beat me. Jesse Thorn, what do you have going on?

Jesse Thorn: Well, it is the very last moments of the very special discount for *Judge John Hodgman* listeners in the Put This On Shop. If you use the code “2024justice”, you will get 25% off in the Put This On Shop. Full 25% off. “2024justice” at PutThisOnShop.com. There's a lot of great stuff that you can get. You just gotta make some room, basically. So, “2024justice” for 25% off anything in that Put This On Shop.

John Hodgman: “2024justice”, PutThisOnShop.com. Let's get back to the show.

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: First of all, we need to call a coroner, because RIP Jesse's inbox. Because it's not *Quincy, M.D.*, Jesse. The name of the program is *Quincy, M.E.*.

Jesse Thorn: Medical Examiner.

John Hodgman: Medical Examiner, starring Jack Klugman. I'm very old. I've got my grave on speed dial.

Jesse Thorn: I should have brought in our friend Jimmy Pardo from *Never Not Funny* to do his *Quincy, M.E.* impression, because it's all he really cares about in the world is talking like *Quincy, M.E.*.

John Hodgman: Well, I'll tell you what, listener, if you listen to the end of the credits, maybe you'll hear a clip of Jimmy Pardo doing *Quincy, M.E.*. Maybe. If you listen all the way through the plugs and the ads and the credits, you might get a little surprise Marvel Cinematic Universe style after the credits.

Meanwhile, producer Jennifer Marmor has been so kind to send me a transcript from our holiday office party episode of last year, 2023, in which Jesse Thorn said, “I too need food in my stomach to go with the sheer volume of orange soda, eggnog, and five-cup salad that's in there.”

And I, Judge John Hodgman, responded saying, “Please don't give me all the parfait layers of what we put into our bodies today.” We were trying a lot of different foods in a lot of different layers, including eggnog and orange soda. Which by the way, thanks for everybody who wrote in to say they tried it, and it wasn't that gross.

But, Rae, you're off the hook there, because I think it's pretty clear in context that I was speaking figuratively, not literally. And we are only speaking figuratively here today. Now I'm going to say this. Because I didn't realize going into this—I'm very grateful, honestly, that Judy's five-layer salad convention of eating food is only an issue of preference and passed down family lore, rather than it is a conviction that this is somehow more healthy or even, for that matter, true. Like, we can set aside the science to a certain degree. I will say that I—aside from Dr. (someday) Rex, which is an incredible name for a new medical examiner show—*Dr. Someday ME*—I did find a press release from Cornell Weill Medical Center saying that Dr. Louis Arone, one of their diabetes care specialists, had found through research that eating protein and vegetables before carbohydrates leads to lower post meal glucose and insulin levels in obese patients with type 2 diabetes. It's a very narrow case study to suggest an overall sense of it perhaps does have an effect what order you put the food into your body.

But I think that that might have more to do with the fact that the body digests water and carbohydrates first and proteins and lipids later. I don't think that it means that it literally layers in the stomach and lines up. I think that what this is a myth to support a personal preference, which is absolutely fine, and an opportunity of goat-getting with regard to your child and soon—perhaps, depending on my ruling—your grandchild.

I would say that everyone, when they eat should not follow Judy's rule or anyone's, but to listen to their body and eat the foods that make them feel healthy and comfortable and should be consulting with a doctor or a dietician if they're going to give it that much thought at all. And I would even argue, think about it less. I think it was Julia Child, one of the many quotes

that I went through who said, “You can't digest well on a worried stomach. So, why are you worrying about all the food that you eat all the time?”

[01:00:00]

We all know the basics of how to eat a healthy diet. And one of the best ways to eat healthfully is to manage your relationship with the food and not think in terms of hard and fast rules all the time, unless you have a medical condition which requires it. And in this regard, while I think you're one of the great go-getters of all moms, Judy.

(Judy thanks him.)

And I appreciate Peepaw being perhaps the standard bearer of goat-getting in this family, even before you.

Judy: Yes, you would love him.

John Hodgman: I bet I would. And as far as Rae is concerned, so long as you are able to hear it if Rae says “this far, no further” with regard to the goat-getting, if Rae is sincerely taking it in good humor and is not being hurt by it—and Rae, stop me if I'm wrong—then, Judy, you are authorized to go get your goat. And Rae, you're authorized to give that goat right back.

Judy: She does.

John Hodgman: But I will thematically appropriately issue a gag order on the layered food theory when it comes to your grandchild, Judy.

Judy: Your honor?

John Hodgman: Uh! I'm the one talking now.

Judy: I'm sorry, sir.

Jesse Thorn: Shut your pie hole, ma'am.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Jesse Thorn: That would be eating some crust and then some filling and then some Latticed crust.

John Hodgman: That's right. In that order. And no other. But Judy, I will allow your objection. Let me hear it.

Judy: It wasn't an objection, sir. It was more of a question. I only have one grandchild, so does this just pertain to him? Or if I have future grandchildren, can I just fill their little brains with knowledge?

John Hodgman: Were you in the military? You looking for loopholes much? Wow.

(Judy laughs.)

Here are the regs, the rules and regulations.

Judy: Darn it.

John Hodgman: Here's the thing. That's between your child and your grandchild. And we have lots of new ways of thinking about how children develop their palates. And basically, the feeling is they're a lot more open minded than we used to think. Kids rarely suffer such nutritional deprivation that this idea that you have to clean your plate is anything but punitive and dramatic. They like what they like, like all human beings. Also, kids develop food aversions, and some have a wider variety of foods they're interested in. And the best practice, it would seem, is just to make lots of food available to kids and let them develop their own palate and their own time and also not give them a lot of rules. Like, to not give them a lot of rules that might cause them to overthink and think uncomfortably about food, because that is unhealthy.

And even if you don't agree with that, it's really between a parent and a child—respectfully. Not even the weirdest grandparent and a child deserve to have that kind of relationship. So, you keep eating your food your way, but I would not make it a point of your relationship between you and your grandchild, because there's just no reason for it. It's not that kids don't think about food. They love food! But you don't want to be giving them rules that cause them to overthink it.

Now, especially since your argument is not even that people should eat this way. It's that you like to eat that way and that it is the best way to eat. I mean, you're not even making an argument that it's healthy or unhealthy or whatever it is. So, I would just say in this one regard, you keep it to yourself. Otherwise, Best Foods and Hellman's are the same, but Hellman's and Duke's are different. Avocado oil mayonnaise is different than egg-based mayonnaise. And none of it is Miracle Whip. Maintain your standards, Judy in Tallahassee. I appreciate them, and you may not be pushed off of them. Continue to live your weird mom life. Continue to be a weird but loving mom and a goat-getter as far as your children are concerned, so long as that you will hear them and stop if they say, "Ugh, mom, stop."

(Judy agrees.)

But leave the seven-layer stomach theory to the past. This is the sound of a gavel.

Clip:

Shrek (*Shrek*): Onions have layers! Ogres have layers. We both have layers!

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

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

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

Rae, are you satisfied?

Rae: I think so. My mom continues to be weird, so that's great. Because I do love her weirdisms. I get a little bit more control when it comes to the parenting situation. He doesn't get a bunch of weird ideas in his head. So, that leaves room for me to give him weird ideas one day.

(Judy laughs.)

John Hodgman: Do you have any big plans?

Rae: Nothing yet, but I'm sure I'll come up with something good.

Jesse Thorn: Judy, how are you feeling?

Judy: I'm feeling good. I'm feeling good. I like to mess with my girls just because I love them so much, and I know it irritates them.

[01:05:00]

So, I will refrain from telling my grandson that his food goes down in layers. Definitely.

Jesse Thorn: Judy, Rae, thanks for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Rae: Thank you. It was fun.

Judy: Thank you so much.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. We'll have Swift Justice in just a second. Our thanks to Redditor u/JennyNEway for naming this week's episode "Chew Process". Join the conversation over at the Maximum Fun subreddit, that's at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun). We ask for our title suggestions there too, so keep an eye out for those. Evidence and photos from the show are posted on our Instagram account at [Instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman). Make sure to follow us there. If you're listening to us on Apple Podcasts, give us a rating and review. Please, it makes a big difference for the show if you go in. I think this week is "please review us in Apple Podcasts week". Shout out to Apple

Podcasts, a mainstay of our listenership for 12 years or however long we've been doing this show.

(John agrees.)

But if you haven't rated and reviewed the show in Apple Podcasts, it really does make a big difference for it to climb up the charts and for people to discover the show. So, this week is the time to do it. Go into Apple Podcasts and rate and review the show.

Judge John Hodgman, of course, was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode was engineered by Eric Fredricey at Boise State Public Radio, and by Taylor Cox at WFSU in Tallahassee, Florida. A.J. McKeon is our editor. Marie Bardi-Salinas runs our social media. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor.

Now, Swift Justice, where we answer small disputes with quick judgment. u/TrilobiteWhatever on the Maximum Fun subreddit says—now that's a reddit name. Trilobite Whatever.

John Hodgman: Trilobite Whatever is great.

Jesse Thorn: “My stepdad, who I love, will not turn any heating on unless we beg. He is controlled by an obsessive fear of wasting money. Please rule that my stepdad needs to move past this compulsion so that we can enjoy our time together and feel cozy.”

John Hodgman: So, I was listening to a great podcast by Alie Ward, called *Ologies*, where Alie was interviewing a friend of our podcast, Helen Zaltzman—who has the amazing *Allusionist* podcast, which deals a lot with etymology and word origin. They were talking about word origin. And I learned something that I didn't know, which is that the etymology of step in stepparent is from an old English via German word, steop, meaning orphan, and is associated with grief. It is a grief parent. Now, obviously I love that you love your stepdad, u/TrilobiteWhatever. And there's many a blended family where everyone is extremely happy and happier together than they might have been otherwise. And there are so many what we call stepparents or bonus parents who are incredible parents. Do you know what I mean?

But I think that if I were coming into a family as a stepparent, one thing I would want to do and put at a high priority in my mind is make sure that the kids are warm enough. *(Chuckles.)* Like, that's not a—I don't know how long this family has been blended. I still would be extra cognizant that the health and baseline happiness of my stepkids is more important than my money saving schemes. So, u/TrilobiteWhatever's stepdad, turn that heat up!

Meanwhile, speaking of the cold, Jesse, it's really cold now. For a lot of this winter, it wasn't cold. Now it's really cold. Those of us in the Northern Hemisphere, we're still months away from spring. I'm very cold right now, here in my office.

Jesse Thorn: John, here in Los Angeles, we're celebrating sweater week.

John Hodgman: Yeah, exactly. Also, I believe you had a drop of rain. So, the whole city came to a standstill. No one can go outside.

(Jesse confirms.)

I'm cooped up at home with my partner, who's also a whole human being in her own right, and we love each other very much. But you know that it's too close, and no amount of hygge is going to stop disputes from happening.

Jesse Thorn: Hygge is some sort of Scandinavian coziness, right?

John Hodgman: Hygge means Scandinavian coziness.

Jesse Thorn: It means cozy in a socialist context.

John Hodgman: Democratic socialist, yeah. You must have some close-quartered conflicts as well out there. Are you cooped up in your dorm and your roommate's lava lamp is keeping you awake at night? Is your partner or spouse's new crafting hobby taking over the living room? Are you aboard the Royal Caribbean Ultimate World Cruise and feuding with another passenger?

Are you following the world cruise, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: No, I'm not familiar with this.

John Hodgman: There's gonna be some weird stuff happening by day 200 of that world cruise. I'd love to hear some disputes from the world cruise. Send us your disputes with people that you're cooped up with. Anyone that you're too close for comfort with physically or figuratively right now.

[01:10:00]

Send in your disputes to MaximumFun.org/jjho, hashtag #TooCloseForComfort. But we'll hear about all your disputes, right, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: Of course, any dispute on any subject, no case is too small. MaximumFun.org/jjho. We'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jimmy Pardo: Alright, here is the—I don't really do an impression of Quincy, but here is my Quincy. *(With a loud, dramatic flair.)* “That was no accident, it was murder!”

You're welcome.

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

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