

PACZKI PARTY IN HAMTRAMCK: Chewing up the competition

Champion snarfs down 15 pastries in 15 minutes

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Polka music played at the Knights of Columbus hall in Hamtramck as Don Gentile ate and ate ... and ate and ate and ate.

Not caring if prune filling smeared his mustache or if powdered sugar sprinkled his stubble or if audience members groaned in horror while watching, Gentile displayed pure paczki passion Tuesday afternoon.

Fifteen minutes.

Fifteen paczki.

At the end of it, after Dan Gury had stopped playing his accordion, Gentile had accomplished the unprecedented: He had become Hamtramck's paczki-eating king for the third year in a row.

"Well, you know, he's the master," said Hamtramck Mayor Karen Majewski after shaking Gentile's hand. "We bow before him. We recognize a genius in our midst."

OK, so 15 paczki -- that's at least 6,000 calories and 375 grams of fat -- was a little off Gentile's record-breaking feast of 22 paczki last year and short of his 20 paczki two years ago.

But that's still more than double the closest competitor, who ate seven paczki.

"There was no competition, or I would have tried harder," insisted Gentile, 41, of Sterling Heights.

After winning, the 5-foot-11, 270-pound Gentile, who attributes his extraordinary love of eating to his Italian roots, collected his prizes (a Paczki Cup assembled with pots and pans and 15 fresh paczki) and left with his uncle and friends to go to a Hamtramck bar called Whiskey in the Jar.

Why?

For lunch, of course.

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Don Gentile, 41, of Sterling Heights won the paczki-eating title Tuesday at the Knights of Columbus hall in Hamtramck. It is his third straight year as champion. His closest competitor downed only seven. (ROMAIN BLANQUART/Detroit Free Press)

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