

Bringing the 18th Century into the 21st Century: Family-run Colonial goods business finds YouTube fame with its historic cookery tutorials of treats - including eel and corn succotash

- Townsends, a family-owned business in Pierceton, Indiana, sells Colonial goods
- It has a popular YouTube channel that demonstrates recipes from 18th century
- James Townsend started the store in 1973 because of his interest in shooting muzzle-loaded guns at a re-enacting event in southern Indiana
- His son Jonathan Townsend, 51, has been running the business since 1995
- Jonathan's brother and two of his three daughters still help with the business
- Townsends started making videos in 2008 to show customers how to use and set up products
- In 2011, they decided to produce videos on how to cook 18th century recipes

By [JORDAN GASS-POORE](#) and [ANN SCHMIDT FOR DAILYMAIL.COM](#)
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Jonathan Townsend works, lives, breathes and eats in the 18th century.

What started with his father's appetite for re-enactments has turned into a family-owned Colonial goods company in Pierceton, Indiana, that has found its fame in the 21st century on YouTube.

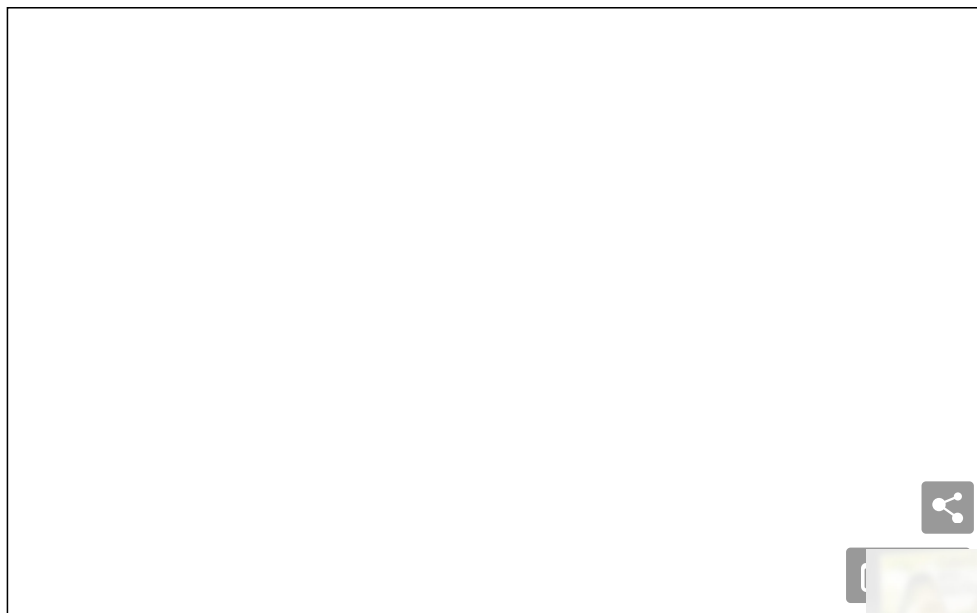
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Dressed in various 18th and 19th century outfits as the host of each video, Jonathan, 51, instructs viewers on how to prepare and cook dishes straight out of Colonial cookbooks.

Jas Townsend and Son's [channel](#) has hundreds of food videos, which the company has been producing weekly since 2011. Videos demonstrate weird and wonderful recipes, including a 1794 corn and eel succotash and a 1743 potato cheesecake.

'If it were up to me, I would probably cook [18th century food] every single day 'cause I'm just that weird,' Jonathan told DailyMail.com with a chuckle.

Take a look at some of the 18th century cooking made by Jon



Jonathan Townsend, 51, (pictured) runs his family business in Pierceton, Indiana, called Townsends, which manufactures and sells Colonial goods specializing in products from about 1840

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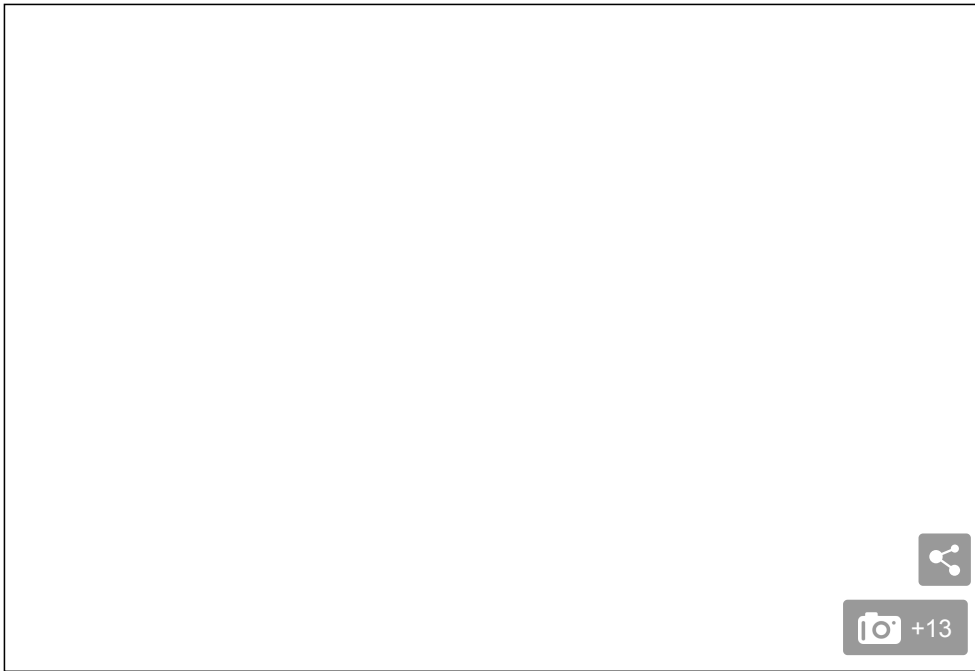
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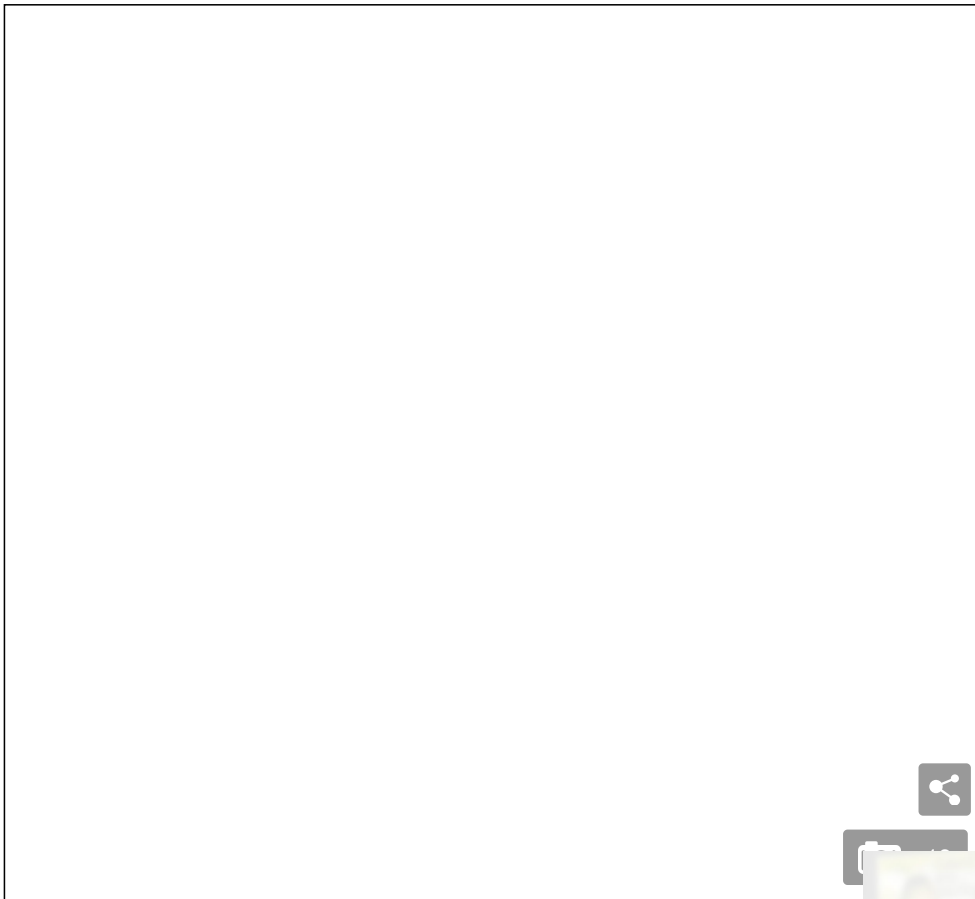
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Townsend's, which was originally called Jas Townsend and Son, was founded by Jonathan's father James (pictured in the 1980s)



Today, Townsend's is still a family effort. Jonathan (back left) has been running the business since 1995 and his wife of 30 years, Whitney (center) used to do bookkeeping for the business. Their three daughters have also helped out with the business like Jonathan helped his mother when he was a child. Their middle daughter Lauren, 28, is pictured right and their youngest daughter Ivy, 11, is pictured front left

'But I'm not the guy who's cooking all the time at home for daily meals,' he says. 'It's not like every single meal I eat is an 18th century recipe, but really, so many of them are very similar to modern foods.'

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'Most of it's just an interesting take on modern food. Sometimes it's totally weird. [For example] eels and corn. But generally they're normal stuff that you would eat every day.'

Jonathan, a good-natured father-of-four runs his family business, which was started by his father, James Townsend, in 1973. Initially, the small store sold period-appropriate camping gear for re-enactors in southern Indiana.

Today the store, which goes by **Townsend's** on its website, is the Wal-Mart of Colonial goods, selling hundreds of period items ranging from wooden whisks and tin coffee pots to garters and 'straight last' shoes, which are made to fit either foot. Many of the items are handmade and many of the products require hours of historical research as they're created.

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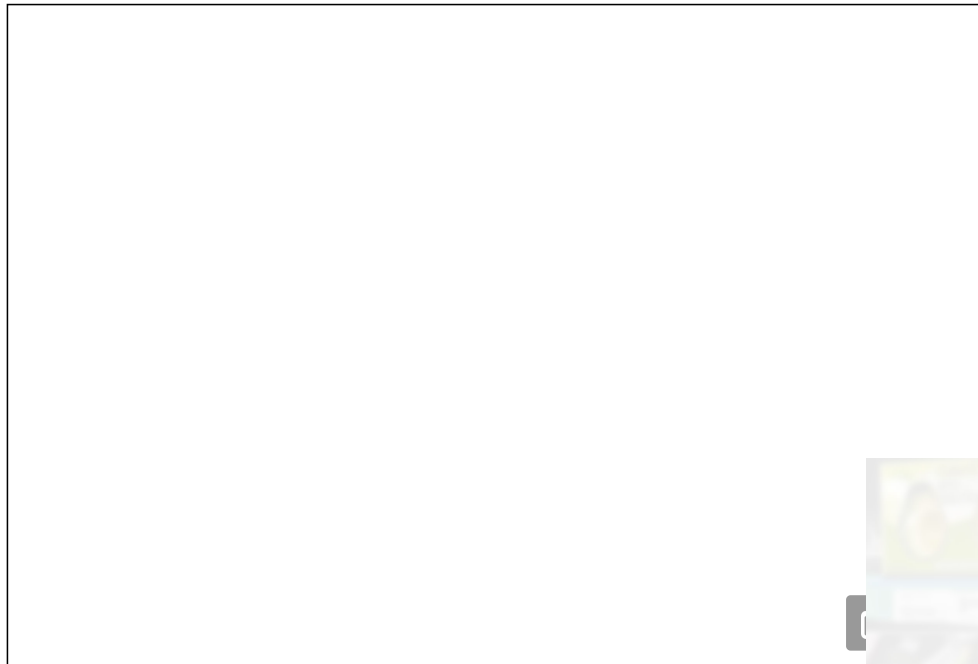
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The store's most popular video on YouTube is an episode from 2016 demonstrating how to make fried chicken from Nathan Bailey's 1736 cookbook called Dictionarium Domesticum. The episode has been viewed 1.7million times.

Townsend's videos are generally watched tens or hundreds of thousands of times, but Jonathan said there's no real rhyme or reason for why some videos become more popular than others.

'When the YouTube gods kind of reach out and touch you, you never know what it is going to be,' Jonathan said. 'There are many particular episodes where you go, okay, I don't know what happened that day. Just, particular things get popular.'

'They all surprise me when they get really really popular. When you wonder, we do the same thing every week. But you know, it's fun. It's always a surprise.'



James (pictured with his wife Suzy in front of their tent at a period event in 1982) had a Civil War musket as a child and started attending national shooting matches for muzzle loaded guns in Indiana in the 1970s

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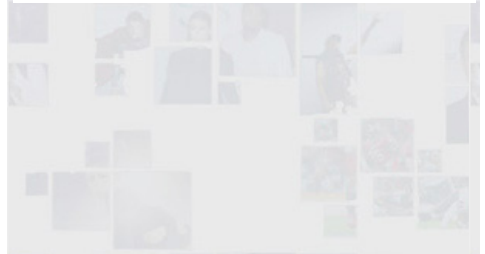
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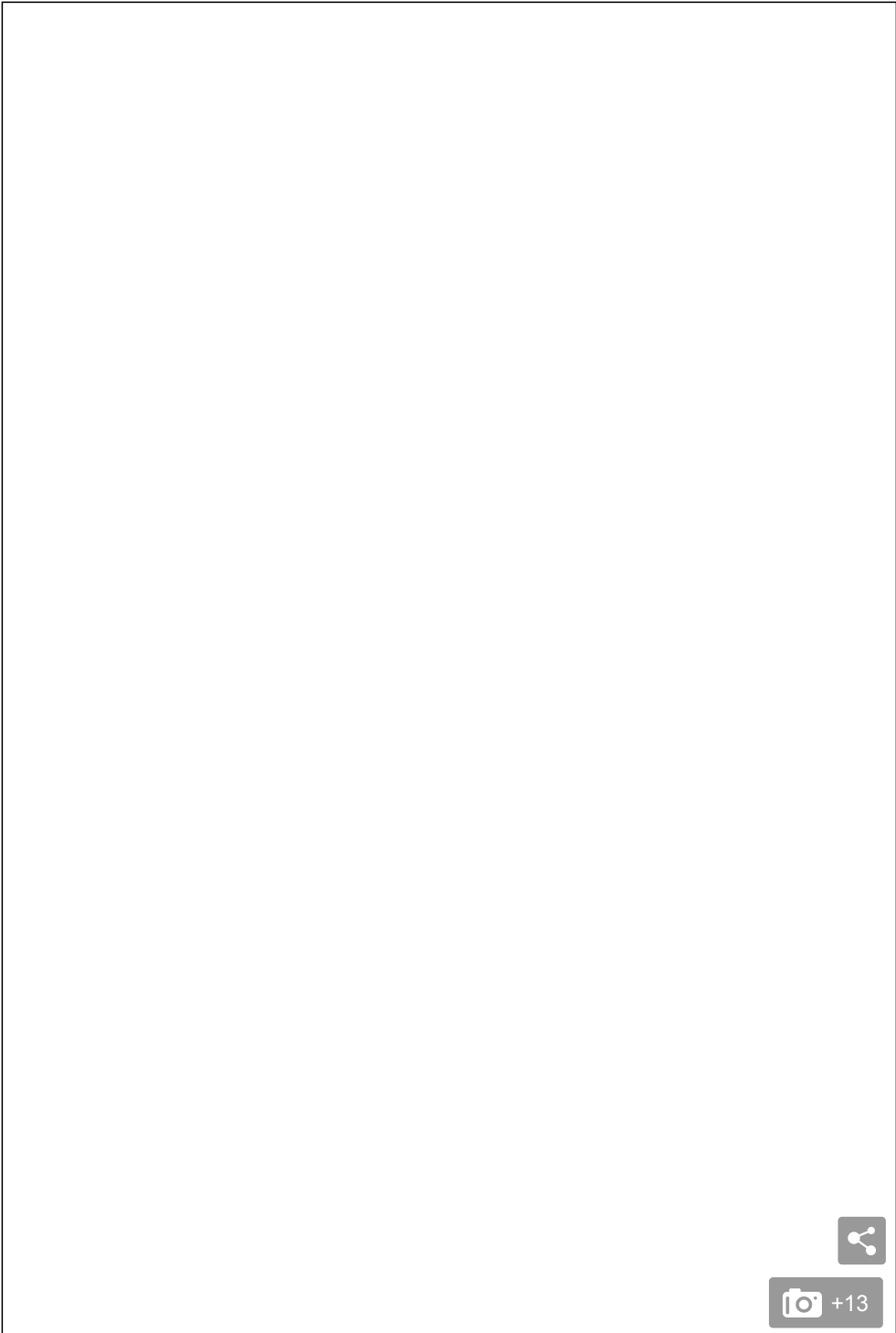
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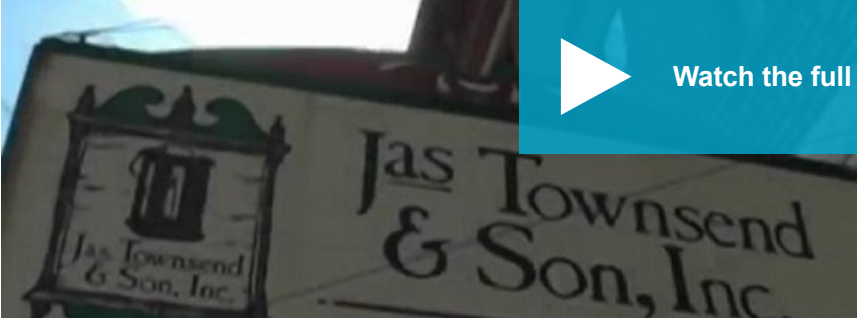
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Townsend's (pictured) is the Wal-Mart of Colonial goods. The store sells hundreds of period items to re-enactors, people and organizations in the living history community and even Hollywood productions

Take a tour inside the Jas Townsend and Son store





Jonathan was about seven years old when his father started in the Colonial goods business and as he grew up, he fell in love with the time period, too.

His father, James, had been given a Civil War musket as a child and by 1973, he became interested in shooting muzzle-loaded guns at living history national shooting matches in southern Indiana.

While he was there, he noticed the re-enactors needed supplies and decided to start Jas and Townsend and Son, which was incorporated in the 1980s.

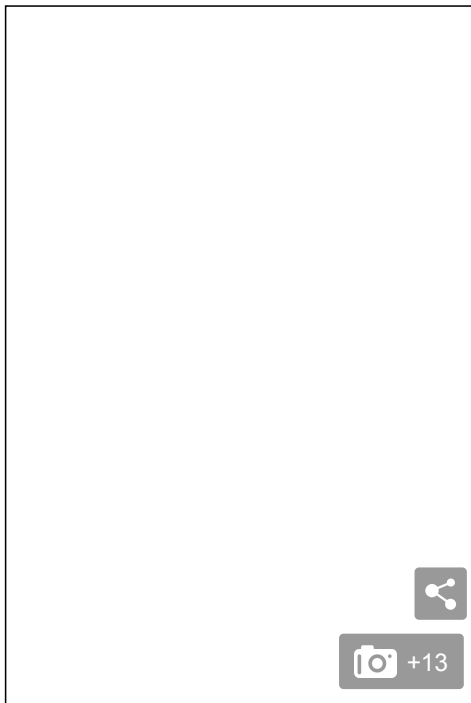
Though he went to college at Purdue for electrical engineering, Jonathan dropped out and returned home, immediately going to work at the family business, which his older sister ran at the time.

By 1995, Jonathan was running the store himself because his sister left to go back to school. Today, his older brother Dan works as Townsends' shipping manager and Jonathan's middle daughter Lauren, 28, does bookkeeping for the store.

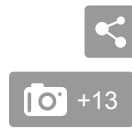
Jonathan's wife of 30 years, Whitney, used to do bookkeeping and their eldest daughter Cydney, 30, used to sew tents for the store, though she now works as a paramedic.

Their youngest daughter, Ivy, 11, is pictured in the store's yearly catalog and sometimes co-hosts the YouTube recipe videos.

'My kids grew up just like I did with the business as sort of a given,' he said. 'Hey, you use whatever assets you have and kids are so interested in what we're doing, so it's fun for them.'



Jas Townsend and Son originally sold Colonial camping gear for re-enactors in southern Indiana. James (pictured) had his business incorporated in the 1980s



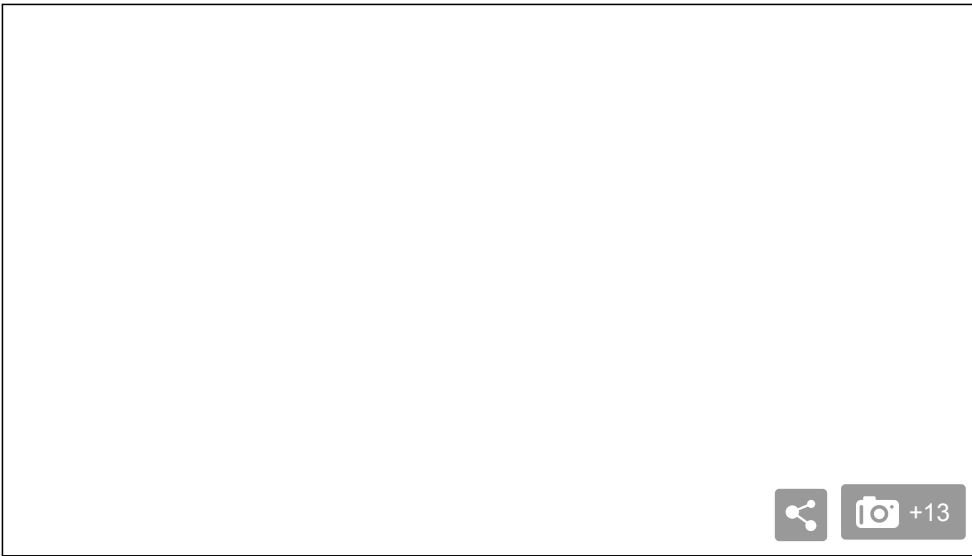
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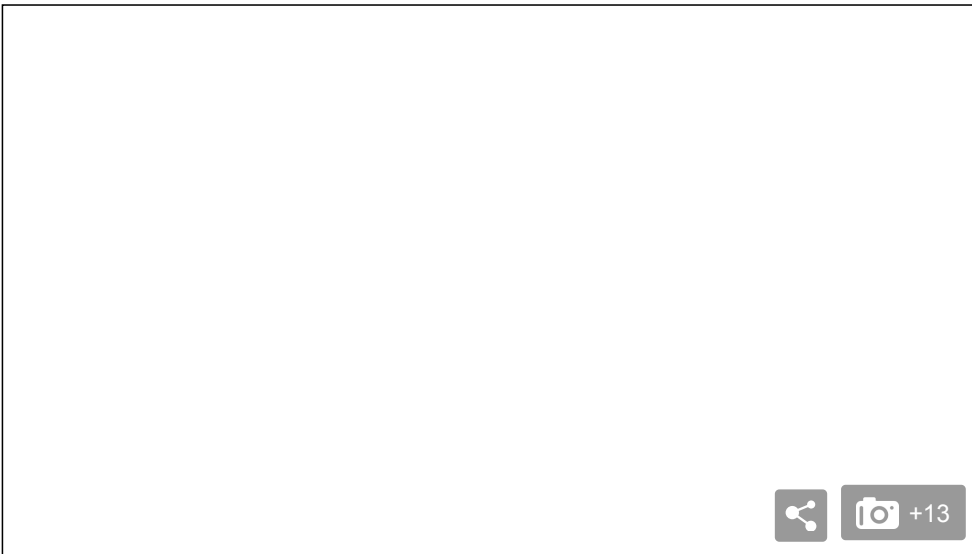
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Jonathan (right) was about seven years old when his father started Jas Townsend and Son and as he grew up he loved helping out in the store and going to events with his father. He is pictured with Ivy during one of the recipe videos



Ivy has been starring and co-hosting the YouTube videos with Jonathan from the beginning

Townsend's started making YouTube videos in late 2008 to demonstrate to customers how to use or set up some of the products, which can be difficult to explain over the phone. Jonathan quickly saw the possibilities for other kinds of videos, so he and his team started experimenting.

'Right off the bat we said, you know, YouTube, that's the place where funny videos are,' he said. 'So we created funny videos around our products and did not have very much success with that and then we thought let's try something different.'

Because the funny videos seemed to come together to tell a story, Townsend's decided to spend a year making a movie that they split into smaller parts for YouTube, but Jonathan said 'that just did not go over very well' either.

1736 FRIED CHICKEN

Townsend's' most popular video, a fried chicken recipe from 1736 posted on YouTube last year and viewed 1.7million times.

The recipe, from Nathan Bailey cookbook called Dictionarium Domesticum, calls to marinate chicken before frying.

Ingredients

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Jonathan said he went back to look at some of the earlier experiment videos to see where they would go from there.

'One of them was just a simple instructional video about cooking a very very simple dish, so we decided to do a series on soldier food and it immediately was successful.

'I mean, just, it was just obvious at that point, we'd been doing the wrong thing all along,' he chuckled. 'It was like, oh, this is what we're supposed to be doing. And so that's sort of how we got started with that.'

That was in the fall of 2011 and today the store uploads a weekly recipe video on Mondays.

For each recipe, Jonathan talks about the culture around the different types of food, techniques and ingredients he uses, touching on both human life and what happens at the stove.

Jonathan and his video team have even done several video series covering topics including 'ultimate survival food' Pemmican, a fat and protein dish from Indigenous peoples in Canada, and historic foods the enslaved African communities in North America would have eaten.

The Townsends channel also make weekly question and answer videos that cover topics including food, hygiene, fashion and home remedies on Thursdays.

Each of the videos are mostly shot on his property about three miles away from Pierceton, on a reconstructed 18th-century German kitchen set Jonathan built. Occasionally he'll go to historical sites and cook with experts or historians.

Though the question and answer videos don't take much time to put together, the five to six-minute long cooking videos can take up to 25 hours to produce.

Up to four people from among his store's 30 employees will help Jonathan with an episode, depending on the video.

Typically, a video requires someone to research the specific dish and topic,

Whole chicken, quartered (Jonathan chose to cut the chicken pieces individually)

Oil for frying

Parsley sprigs

Marinade:

2 large lemons

Equal amount distilled vinegar

2 Bay leaves

1 tsp salt

1 tsp black pepper

¼ tsp cloves

½ cup green onions or shallots

Batter:

1 ½ cups all-purpose flour

White wine, such as Rhine wine

3 egg yolks

1 tsp salt

STEPS

Combine marinade ingredients and let chicken marinate for three hours. Jonathan recommended not waiting longer because the vinegar could flavor the chicken too much.

After three hours, combine batter ingredients to a pancake-like batter and dip the chicken into your choice of frying oil. In the 18th century, lard or a clarified butter would have been the most common options, according to Jonathan.

The oil should be heated to about 350 degrees and chicken should be cooked until it is a 'light mahogany brown'.

The final component to the recipe is fried parsley. The parsley springs must be very very dry and should be fried in small batches for several minutes until it gets crispy.

It should be added on top of the chicken as a garnish.

Source: [Townsends/YouTube](#)



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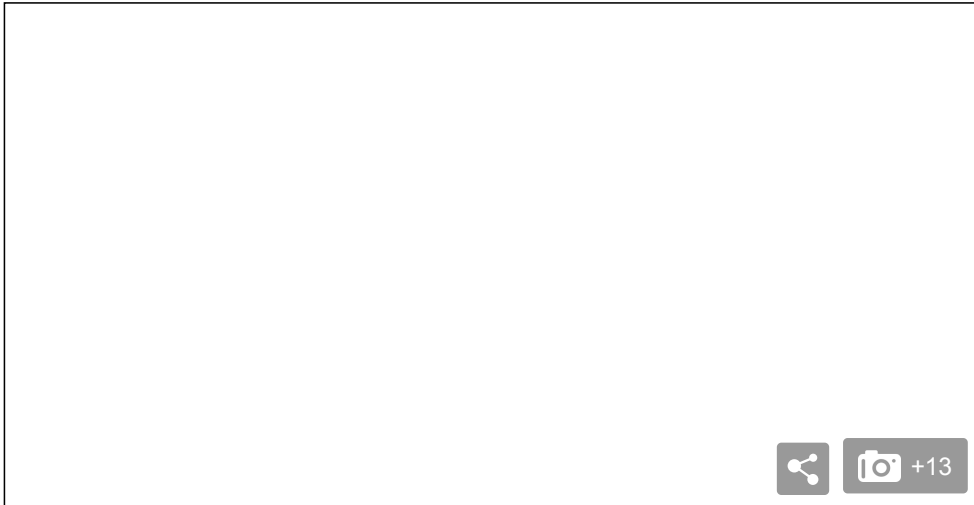
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who films the video, someone who directs and someone who edits, though the team can alternate jobs.



Jonathan hosts most of the recipe videos from his property but sometimes goes to historical sites and is joined by other experts. He is pictured with Michael Twitty, a culinary historian who specializes in food of the African-American community from the mid-18th century to the mid 19th century at Gunston Hall in Mason Neck, Virginia



Twitty helped host Townsends' video recipe series on historic foods the enslaved African communities in North America would have eaten including okra soup (pictured), barbecue, Akara and kush

Jonathan said they choose recipes randomly, by flipping through their huge selection of Colonial cookbooks or by browsing online. Sometimes they'll focus on a specific type of food because of the season, but usually the recipes are whatever look 'cool'.

In the six years he's been doing the videos, Jonathan said he hasn't had any big mishaps, though he is sometimes surprised by how well some foods turn out. His least favorite things are pickled, with the pickled smelt – a type of small fish last thing on his eat-list.

'Some of the recipes, you think there's just no way this is going to work and out just fine. There are certainly surprises along the way, but none where w deathly ill or anything like that,' he said.

Though he likes most everything he makes, Jonathan's least favorite dish so been pickled smelt – a type of small fish – which he made in a video in 2015

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When Townsends started producing videos back in 2008, they were intended to appeal to the store's regular customers as a way to connect them with their past time.

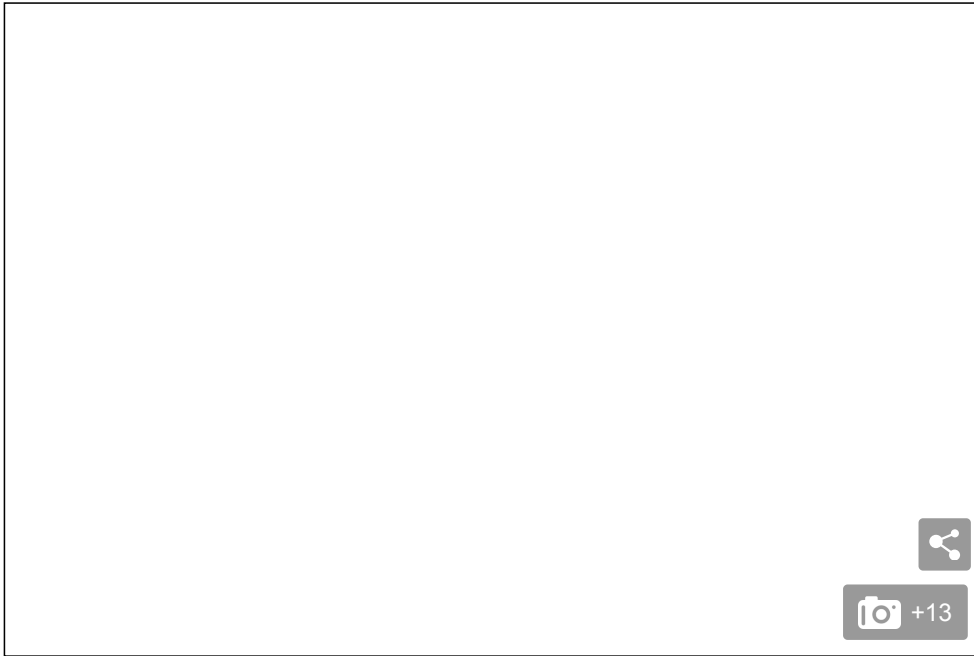
'The real surprise is what happens to all the other people that are affected,' Jonathan said.

'People from all over the world are watching those videos, connecting with them and talking to us about them, as opposed to earlier, 10 years ago, we kind of [felt] very isolated in what we do.'

He added: 'Food is probably the main connector point with anyone. It's one of these communication methods that we don't think about very much in the modern world, but it's probably one of the best ways for individuals to interact.'

'As we built the YouTube channel, not just re-enactors, and not just hardcore history people, but just regular people are totally engaged in the channel and excited by it, and it's just great to get all that feedback.'

About 20per cent of the store's web traffic comes directly from the YouTube channel according to Jonathan.



Townsends started posting videos on YouTube in 2008 to show their customers how to use and set up products which can be difficult to explain over the phone. After realizing the potential of online videos, they tried to make funny videos for at least a year, with no success. In 2011 they tried a food series on soldier's rations and cooking and it was a huge hit. Townsends has been posting weekly recipe videos since then

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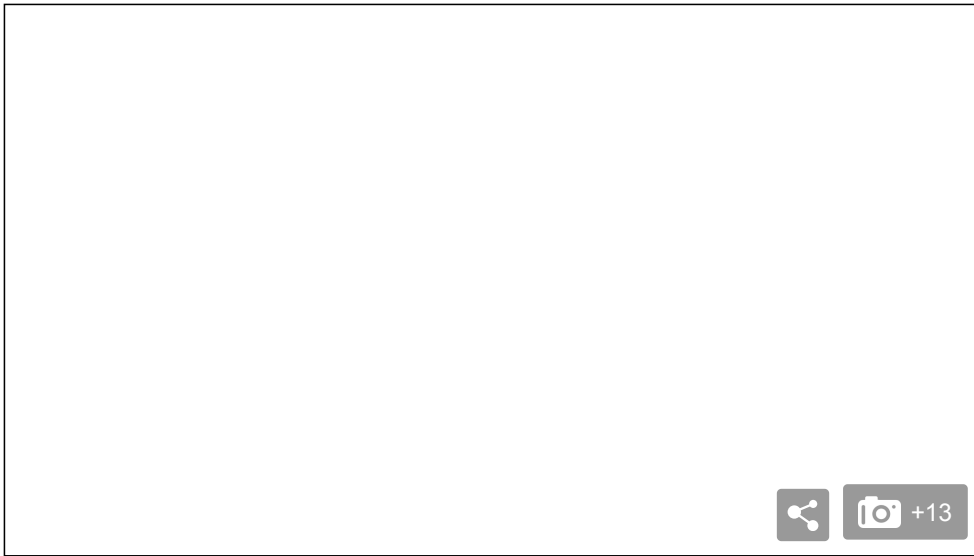
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Jonathan explains the culture around the food he uses, the cooking techniques and the ingredients he uses in each of the recipe videos, which are posted to YouTube on Mondays

Even though those people visiting the site aren't necessarily regular customers who are already interested in living history or re-enactments, the videos are still incredibly important for Townsends.

When George Washington's Mount Vernon needed to clothe its staff in period attire, they knew just the place. Representatives with the historic site in Virginia contacted Townsends and bought an assortment of linen gowns, bodices and cotton stockings to decorate the grounds.

Townsends also enjoys a bustling Hollywood business, supplying clothing and other items to television shows and movies over the years. Some of their work has been featured in Turn: Washington's Spies, Outlander, the Pirates of the Caribbean and National Treasure franchises and The Patriot.

There's a scene in The Patriot where a boy is painting lead soldiers using an ink well that Townsend himself made in his store's basement, according to Townsend.

Other people not in Hollywood or interested in living history are also customers, but not as regularly.

'There are a few items that kind of click with people in the modern world,' Townsend said.

'Some people like some of the items for decorative purposes. Some people just kind of want a little connection to history so they have one object that they have and it makes them think about historical things.'

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Because he grew up in the Colonial goods business, Jonathan (pictured) loves his work. He said: 'It's a matter of doing a lot of research in books and looking at museum things that are constructed... Then we have to kind of decide how those things were made in the time period and then figure out how we can make them today inexpensively or not'

Everything at Townsends is as authentic as possible, which means Jonathan and his team work hard on everything they produce, even making shirts and dresses to order.

'It's a matter of doing a lot of research in books and looking at museum things that are constructed,' he said. 'Then we have to kind of decide how those things were made in the time period and then figure out how we can make them today inexpensively or not.'

The store specializes in products from 1750 to 1840 because of how things were changing during that time period, Jonathan said.

'Obviously, we got the founding of the United States, but we also have, within a bunch of different cultures, a move from agriculture to industrial, so there's a lot of turmoil going on there, but a lot of evolution in product.

'If you get past about 1840 everything starts to become factory made... Earlier, everything was handmade, by the time you get to 1840 it's all factory made. What's the point?'

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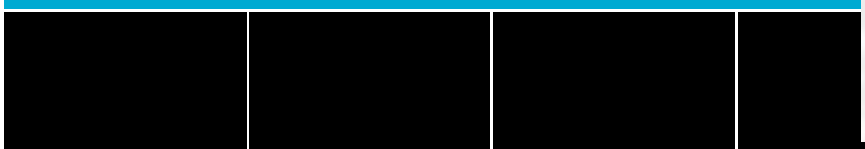
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Fiona Bruce reveals antiques expert drank	Thug attacks man and stabs him with huge	Teenage thug takes to Snapchat to boast	Father of Greta Thunberg reveals
Greta Thunberg dismisses idea of	Sir David Attenborough praises Greta	Two acrobats fall in front of children in	Victim is carried on stretcher following

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MORE TOP STORIES

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Took to Instagram on Monday

▶ [Hailee Steinfeld sends fans into a frenzy as she hints she's penned a 'diss track' about ex Niall Horan with cryptic 'Wrong Direction' post](#)

▶ [Macaulay Culkin and girlfriend Brenda Song show team spirit in blue and yellow as the support the Rams in their final game at the LA Memorial Coliseum](#)

▶ ['I didn't expect them to come': Caitlyn Jenner reveals she called her kids to apologize after they were slammed for snubbing her UK TV show appearance](#)

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▶ [Pia Miller, 36, flaunts her figure in tiny orange bikini at Sydney's Bondi Beach... days after going Instagram official with Lauren Sanchez's ex Patrick Whitesell, 54](#)

▶ [Catherine Zeta-Jones shares family portrait with Michael Douglas... after her children, Dylan and Carys, enjoy a 'tin bath surprise'](#)

▶ [TV chef Nigella Lawson, 59, praises 'brave' women who go without makeup as she admits she uses cosmetics as 'armor'](#)

▶ [Eva Longoria flaunts her taut bod in strapless bikini before hitting the beach with baby](#)



▶ **Danny Fujikawa as couple continue Christmas vacation**
Let their hair down in snowy Colorado

▶ **The Mandalorian Season 1 finale scores a rare 100% Fresh rating on Rotten Tomatoes**
Has been just as big a hit with critics as it has been with fans

▶ **Alessandra Ambrosio flaunts her figure in a black bikini while on family holiday in Brazil**
The 38-year-old supermodel looked fit as ever

▶ **Tana Mongeau is 'unhappy' about aspects of 'marriage' with Jake Paul: 'So many things keep hurting me further'**
Opened up about her love life issues

▶ **'Let me guess? You're going to cut all the toxic people out of your life, go to the gym and focus on you in 2020?'**
Shanina Shaik takes a swipe at New Year's 'resolutions'

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▶ **Nick Young and fiancée Keonna Green step out for dinner in West Hollywood after Christmas proposal**
The couple got engaged on Christmas Day

▶ **Simon Cowell's girlfriend Lauren Silverman wows in a plunging lace-up swimsuit as she strolls along the beach with son Eric in Barbados**

▶ **John Legend and Chrissy Teigen trade in snow for sand following vacation in Wyoming...**
in wake of Legend's debut album anniversary

**TODAY'S
TOP VIDEOS**

▶ **Zara and Mike Tindall 'would consider MOVING to Australia' after she retires from eventing - and are set to come Down Under with their children in 2020**

▶ **Real Housewives Of Atlanta: Kenya Moore cries while admitting being in 'real low place' with husband**
The 48-year-old reality star got emotional

▶ **Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker repeats atop the box office for a second straight weekend with \$72M... as Cats is poised to lose at least \$71M**

▶ **That'll get the likes! Steve Irwin's 'hot niece' Rebecca Lobie flaunts her ample bust in a plunging black swimsuit for a candid selfie**

▶ **Rose McGowan slams claims that the #MeToo movement makes it 'hard for men to flirt with women' because they're afraid of crossing a line**

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▶ **Martin Lawrence, 54, and his fiancée Roberta Moradfar, 38, look smitten as they sit courtside at the basketball in Los Angeles**

▶ **Tom Cruise spotted by eagle-eyed fans in VIP section of Lady Gaga's Enigma residency in Las Vegas**
Enjoying the show

▶ **Kevin Hart thanks his fans and encourages**

**TODAY'S
TOP VIDEOS**

▶ Orlando Bloom gets into a playful screaming match with fiancée Katy Perry's relatives during a raucous game of Taboo

▶ Nina Agdal wows in bikini during trip to 'paradise' with beau Jack Brinkley-Cook and his mom Christie (and even serves as their photographer)

▶ Jennifer Lopez cuts a boss look in black Chanel belt as she and Alex Rodriguez shop for commercial real estate in LA

▶ Bindi Irwin 'grateful' to be home for New Year with her 'beautiful family' after celebrating Christmas with fiancé Chandler Powell in the US

▶ 'I bounced back quickly': Zac Efron opens up about his brush with death after contracting dangerous infection while filming in Papua New Guinea

▶ 'Utterly dismayed' John Cleese leads tributes to Monty Python musician and comedian Neil Innes after his death aged 75

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▶ California girl? Australian model Tammy Hembrow uses Americanisms like 'candy' and 'bell pepper' in her latest YouTube video

▶ Young Sheldon's Iain Armitage, 11, says he loved Cats ... as film proves one of Hollywood's biggest box office busts of the year

▶ Model Lara Stone poses for a rare selfie with property developer



**TODAY'S
TOP VIDEOS**

▶ **around with a female friend during a wintry holiday in Aspen with girlfriend Kylie Lim**
Day out

▶ **Georgina Rodriguez puts on a cheeky display in the pool after jet-ski ride on Dubai holiday with Cristiano Ronaldo... after denying they secretly married**

▶ **Kendall Jenner shows her spiritual side in 'Jesus Is King' sweatshirt on one year anniversary of Kanye West's Sunday Service**

▶ **Lizzo teases her cleavage in leopard Savage x Fenty robe... after clapping back at a body-shaming troll on Twitter**
The Truth Hurts artist

▶ **Inside Zac Efron's trip from hell: How the Hollywood star, 32, went from being welcomed by locals in Papua New Guinea to contracting a deadly infection**

▶ **Gigi Hadid sends fans wild as they speculate she is back together with Zayn Malik after model shares snap of herself cooking one of ex's mother's recipes**

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▶ **Only in Australia! Rebel Wilson is chased by a WOMBAT and jokes it's her 'newest form of cardio' as she visits a Sydney wildlife sanctuary**

▶ **Jessie J shares emotional Instagram post about 'healing' as she offers mental wellness advice to her followers amid Channing Tatum split**



**TODAY'S
TOP VIDEOS**

▶ **Jessica Simpson hits the slopes with daughter Maxwell and brother-in-law Evan Ross during family trip to Aspen, Colorado**
Hitting the slopes

▶ **'I nearly burst into tears': Fatboy Slim became emotional listening to his viral Right Here, Right Now remix that samples Greta Thunberg**

▶ **Kris Jenner is picture perfect wearing a vibrant green gown for dinner with Corey Gamble in St. Barts**

▶ **Disney star Devan Leos avoids jail in attempted murder case in LA over car incident with man in 7-Eleven parking lot**

▶ **Kylie Minogue enjoys a break on Rottneest Island as she glams up for a photo shoot... after starring in a \$15m Tourism Australia campaign**

▶ **Eyes on the prize: Rafael Nadal jets into Perth for the inaugural ATP Cup... after a brief honeymoon with wife Xisca Perelló**

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▶ **Kim Kardashian's BFF Larsa Pippen showcases her dangerous curves in yellow skintight pantsuit**
Made a bold fashion statement

▶ **Jennifer Lopez indulges in post-Christmas furniture**

**TODAY'S
TOP VIDEOS**

▶ **social media followers to choose a name for her unborn baby girl**
Options included Shay, Presley and Selena

▶ **Tori Spelling looks like BFFs with her husband's ex Mary Jo Eustace in selfie... years after cheating scandal: 'I never thought this pic would happen'**

▶ **Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker writers weren't trying to 'sideline' Rose Tico... after fans speak out about Kelly Marie Tran's beloved character**

▶ **Sir Tom Jones, 79, admits he eyes up women in their thirties but confesses 'it's mostly the grandmothers who fancy me'**

▶ **Mariah Carey braves the snow for a spot of shopping at Louis Vuitton in Aspen with her beau Bryan Tanaka**

▶ **'Oh God!' You star Penn Badgley accidentally lets slip that psychotic stalker Joe Goldberg WILL return for a third season of hit Netflix show**

▶ **Mark Wahlberg's wife Rhea sizzles in a thong swimsuit while chiseled actor displays his washboard abs on holiday in Barbados**

▶ **EXCLUSIVE Meghan and Harry's \$14m holiday hideaway revealed: Royals spent first Christmas with baby Archie at Canadian waterfront mansion**

▶ **Jenna Dewan flaunts**

**TODAY'S
TOP VIDEOS**

▶ Anthony Joshua shows off his sporting prowess as he goes jet skiing off the shores of Barbados during festive break... weeks after huge boxing victory

▶ Vanessa Hudgens is a candid cutie as she enjoys the holidays in Switzerland... after announcing 2020 clothing line and album on Instagram

▶ Tammy Hembrow showcases her sensational figure in a skimpy bikini top and matching pants as she enjoys an idyllic Bali getaway

▶ Victoria Beckham is praised by close pal Eva Longoria as they spend Christmas together... amid claims her fashion empire is battling huge debt

▶ James Packer and girlfriend Kylie Lim trudge through the snow in Aspen as they enjoy a quiet Christmas with friends
Mariah Carey's ex

▶ Suki Waterhouse is in high spirits as she steps out WITHOUT an engagement ring after Robert Pattinson proposal rumors

▶ Disney actor Stoney Westmoreland, 49, who is accused of trying to have sex with a 13-year-old boy, claims the judge in his case has a bias against gay people

▶ Magician Criss Angel posts heartbreaking photos of his five-year-old son Johnny in chemotherapy and reveals his cancer has relapsed

▶ 'I don't want to fall apart in public': James May, 56, admits he could quit The Grand Tour because he's 'developing nervous

**TODAY'S
TOP VIDEOS**