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Watch Hungry Todd Rungy "Eating for America" in His New Show

By [Jordan Gass-Poore](#) on April 5, 2012 - 10:00am in [Local Indies](#)

Sauce from a [Torchy's Tacos](#) Trailer Park taco dripped down [Todd Rungy's](#) dark brown beard as he reminisced about the restaurant's 2011 fried avocado eating contest. The Torchy's contest, which Rungy lost amidst a food fight, is one of the many events in the Austin-based competitive food eater's life in 2011 as chronicled in the first season of [The Hungry Todd Rungy Show](#).

The show's pilot premiered at SXSW 2012, where it received a positive response, and the producer is about to shop the whole 12-episode first season to TV networks. In the meantime, you can watch the pilot online for a limited time on [YouTube](#) -- it's also embedded at the end of this article.

Rungy said he began "eating for America" as a child. He said he would participate in eating competitions sponsored by his childhood church in Michigan. As an adult, Rungy said he ate a 20-ounce steak at a Michigan restaurant to prove to himself that he could. Besides a free steak and his photo on a wall in the restaurant, he said he gained confidence in himself and continued to enter competitive eating contests.

[Joshua Riehl](#), the creator/director/producer of *The Hungry Todd Rungy Show*, heard about Rungy from a friend in Michigan. When the Detroit native moved to Austin in 2009 to enroll in the radio-TV-film program at The University of Texas at Austin, he contacted Rungy through Facebook.

Riehl said he initially contacted Rungy with the intention of filming a satire about competitive food eating. However, he changed his mind shortly after filming began.

"The more I filmed the more I realized, 'Yes, competitive food eating is absurd. On the surface it's ridiculous, but this guy really believes in it, he really believes what he doing and he loves it,'" he said. "The story wasn't about the food competition. It was about the person who does food competitions."

Filming began in August 2010 and continued for four months. What was captured during the almost 250 hours of footage surpassed Riehl's and Rungy's expectations.

Rungy met his girlfriend on the UT campus on the first day of filming, while passing out flyers for a short film Riehl was screening -- an adaptation of an Ernest Hemingway story Riehl completed in Michigan. She attended the short film's screening and later one of Rungy's food competitions.

"I think I captured her with my charm," he said as he wiped the Torchy's taco sauce from his beard.

Rungy's and Taylor's first date, watching the bats in Austin, is also captured on film.

Rungy said he feels as though he has grown up since filming *The Hungry Todd Rungy Show* began. He attributes this in part to Riehl's ambition and to his girlfriend's maturity - he said she is trying to make him eat more healthfully and not be such a "trash talker."

"When I first came to Austin I felt like a wild dog, now I've been tamed," Rungy said.

The transformation from amateur to professional competitive eater started when Rungy moved from Michigan to Austin. His first cash prize contest was eating a large Tootie Pie Co. apple pie in less than six minutes, where he won \$100 and went into what he described as a "crazy sugar shock." Rungy said he was legitimately afraid a doctor would diagnose him with diabetes after he finished the contest.

His fear has since waned after incorporating America-themed T-shirts into his attire, as well as a matching red, white and blue headband.

"Now I feel like it's kind of my safety guard, like if I'm not wearing it I feel like I'm not 'Super Todd Rungy,'" he said. "I feel like when I put this on it's time to eat. It (also) pulls my hair back."

However, there is one food Rungy said he will not eat: deviled eggs. Deviled eggs have not stopped him from being invited to audition for the television series *America's Got Talent* or working to become the country's number-one competitive eater.



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Riehl described *The Hungry Todd Rungy Show* as a time capsule of Austin, paralled with his and Rungy's quest for the American Dream.

"On the surface, the show's almost the antithesis of my work, but when you really kind of look at it, it's about this one man's journey to accomplish something," he said.



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