

Half-time Oranges: Fuel of the Roar

Photography: Alex Kelaart | Words: Long Prawn | Art Direction: PractiseStudioPractise

The food that fuels a crowd's roar couldn't be further removed from the regimented diet of elite sport players. Nowadays, steadily 'smashing a pie' as hot meaty gravy drops into the palm of your hand is just as much a part of being a Good Sport as knowing the game. "Half-time Oranges" cuts and quarters the edible elements of the sports we love. In this issue, Alex Kelaart and Melbourne artistic collective Long Prawn investigate the saturated sustenance of Australian sport fans.

In any game the spectators are the all-knowing, all-seeing and all-eating organs of a stadium. We spoke to fans to hear about their sideline snacks, from the humble and resourceful food brought from home to the utterly addictive junk. Revelers told us of boiled sausages kept tepid in thermoses before being enveloped in a slice of bread and liberally doused in tomato sauce. A Mars Bar and a Diet Coke was an unquestioned meal for many. The more we pried, the more we heard of both kid and adult fans trained to cheer on hot chippies in paper cups, packets of dry Milo, Killer Pythons and chalky lollipops whose paper sticks would sog into early submission. Meat pies were an obvious staple and sugary jam doughnuts that burned your chin were par for the course. Alongside an ethos of camaraderie, peak fitness and leadership, were swathes of devilish foods.

As spectators, we know exactly what it takes for a sportsperson to be the best on the field. Hard work, practice and a diet that allows you to excel are all paramount to success. Week after week, rain hail or shine, we watch our greatest heroes optimise while we do the exact opposite. So why are hordes of sports flagbearers also stalwarts of excessive salt, sugar and saturated fats?

A good fan is required to perform a very different role to a good athlete. Yes, they go hand in hand, but a fan is there to be a chip bucket of emotion, a sitting pot of excitement destined to spill over when the time is right. Loading up on carbohydrates and refined sugars not only lights up the brain of a fan with dopamine, but also fills their guts with easily digested and rapidly absorbed fuel. Right about when the horn goes, the junk kicks in and





“Nothing says “you’re alright mate” like a belly poking over a belt buckle—a bum bag of culture that actually affirms a spectator’s legitimacy.”

unleashes a league of emotions necessary for exactly four quarters of hot footy. But a fan is not always a happy little camper; what about when their team lets go of a clanger or the ump is being a grump? There’s a deep logic to this too—these foods are moody foods, perfect for the trials and tribulations, the ups and the downs, the winning and the losing. Right when their sugar dips, their beer kicks in, combining in a knife’s-edge emotional mix of elation and despair: “Balllllll!” they yell. The sugar and grease gives them the perfect excuse to be total bandits. After all, if you’re gonna lose you don’t want to be just sad, you want to be burning with ingestion and sweating out processed meats instead of tears. This food isn’t an oversight or a defect of fandom, quite the opposite! It’s a tailored diet refined for the function of fuelling the roar and firing up the cheer squad.

Any fan who denies that their fine-tuned diet is specifically chosen for making noise is merely protecting the hard work of generations of spectators. Like any great Australian success or shortcoming, they will readily deceive you by slapping the C-word onto it ... CULTURE! When it comes to eating, you can get away with some pretty ludicrous situations if you can pass it off as culture. Nothing says “you’re alright mate” like a belly

poking over a belt buckle—a bum bag of culture that actually affirms a spectator’s legitimacy.

In pursuit of a better understanding, we headed to the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), Aussie Rules football’s colosseum—the nirvana for fans and players alike. According to Epicure, the ground’s caterer, not all fans fill up on the same stuff; each club has certain favourites. Without adding too much salt to stereotypes, the boys in blue over at Carlton Football Club represent their geographical namesake and consume the most pizza at the ground. The high-flying Hawks team keep things level with a high-carb burger followed by a low-carb Pure Blonde. Bulldogs players keep their hardball reputation through old-time heroes, hot chippies and pies.

We joined 60,000 other hungry punters at this year’s annual Aussie Rules Queen’s Birthday match, where fans of the Melbourne Demons and the Collingwood Magpies fed their furor with everything from gourmet sausages to dimmies and soy sauce. As stadiums get fancier, screens bigger and merch more aspirational, Lucky Prawn is convinced that the never-changing staple stodge is a not just a habit, but a necessity to the success of the game. Until a kale salad fires people up to cheer fervently and give unwavering dedication to stand and yell, we hope it stays this way.



Half-time Oranges: Fuel of the Roar



