

# These binge-eating stars get paid to gorge on camera

As watching people chow down idlis and glug lassis becomes a pastime, people are making a career from gluttony

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Nine plates of rice lie on a table, and a Tamil gentleman diligently pours some curry over them and proceeds to finish plate after plate. He eats with concentration, occasionally making comments about how good it tastes. Eating big isn't just the passion of 57-year-old Porchezhiyan, it's also his business. He and his doctor-son Sabari Kumar run a popular Tamil YouTube channel Saapattu Raman, which rakes in anywhere between Rs 70,000 and Rs 85,000 a month.

The father-son duo is one of India's most popular binge-eaters. From chowing down 100 idlis in 10 minutes to eating their way through the largest pizza you've ever seen, these speed eaters rack millions of views on YouTube.

Vishwa and Akash Joshi run a channel called Viwa Food World, which has 26.5 lakh subscribers, and counting. The brothers have put out almost 200 videos in which they challenge each other to see who can eat more. Of late, they have tried to move beyond 'quantity challenges', but food is still the core of their channel. Akash Joshi, 31, says, "Now people know we can eat a lot, so we don't feel the need to prove that anymore." But their latest challenge does include mouthing movie dialogues while stuffing marshmallows.

## VISHWA AND AKASH JOSHI VIWA FOOD WORLD

26.5 lakh subscribers

The brothers, who compete to see who can eat the most the fastest, eat only veg food

Their challenges have unique elements — like 'try not to laugh while eating' or 'eat cheese balls with no hands'

The duo, whose sibling dynamic shines through in their content, don't want to say exactly how much they make every month, but it is enough for both of them to be full-time YouTubers and support their families. Apart from ad revenue, which fluctuates, they often work with sponsors to promote products on

their videos.

This genre of video is quite similar to the Korean, and now-global, phenomenon of mukbang, in which people livestream themselves eating large quantities of food, but it is not quite the same. For one, mukbang has interactivity at its core — the creator eats in real-time, and their viewers can type in their thoughts. And while mukbang videos entail eating huge quantities of food, it's a lone person eating with no real compulsion or deadline to finish. Some argue that the popularity of mukbang comes down to the growing loneliness of modern life, with many opting for these videos so they don't have to eat alone.

Sanket Sankpal, a 22-year-old Mumbaier began his channel Wake N Bite two years ago. His first video garnered

one lakh views overnight, and the rest (including him claiming to hold the record for the fastest anyone has eaten a vada pav — 13 seconds) is history. "The biggest challenge is to keep finding new concepts for videos. We kept researching which restaurants specialise in interesting items — for instance, the world's biggest sizzler," says the civil engineering student.

So, why do people want to spend their time watching people eat so much food?



The competitive element of these videos hooks people in. Beyond that, it is gluttony gamified — they take our base impulse to stuff our mouths, so that those watching at home don't have to. For many of us, overeating is a guilt-laden act. There's something cathartic about watching someone for whom eating large quantities of food is not a source of shame, but their very calling card.

## SANKET SANKPAL WAKE N BITE

4.4 lakh subscribers

Features restaurants with unique dishes like the world's biggest dosa or sizzler

He claims to hold the record for the fastest anyone has eaten a vada pav — 13 seconds

While the sight of grown men devouring obscene quantities of food may not be what most of us qualify as appetising, many say that these videos make them hungry. Meghna Dutta, 21, has been watching Viwa Food World videos for about six months now. "I have fallen in love with their competition videos, particularly the part where the person who loses gets a punishment," she says. Dutta watches the videos as soon as they drop biweekly at 9.30am. "I watch while I eat breakfast, and it really makes me want to eat some crazy breakfast."

Amid the fun and games, there are health hazards too. Sankpal recalls a video where he consumed 1.2 litres of honey in a minute and 26 seconds. "I ended the video with a smile and then the sugar hit me. I started babbling uncontrollably and my mom made me take a long nap to recover," he said. He adds that filming kills the taste too as food turns cold by the time of eating.

Sabari Kumar says people express concern about his father Porchezhiyan's appetite, but their secret is that all their food is homemade. "It's not like my father only does this for YouTube. He's a big eater — he has 1.5kg of mutton in a meal. On videos, he tends to eat 1kg more," says the 25-year-old doctor.

