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Cover-up

Top dogs slip under a blanket of mustard, kraut, salsa, bacon ...

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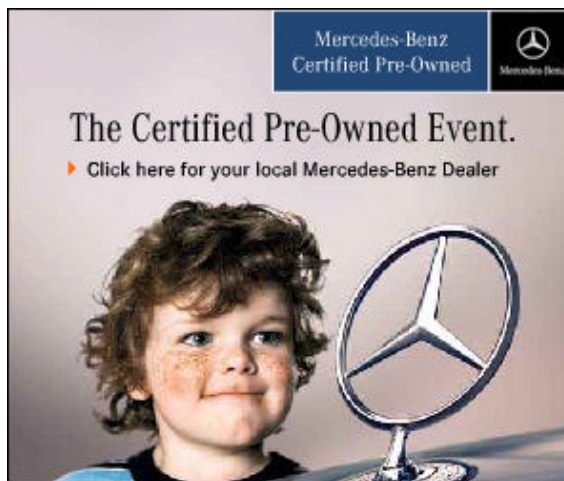
There is no excuse for getting tired of hot dogs. If you expand the category to include brats, Italian sausage and foot-longs and then start adding up all the possible toppings - well, keep your calculator handy.

Consider that Koegel Meats, a Genesee County institution since 1916, makes 18 different kinds of wieners and ring and link sausages.

It is a little tricky to eat Koegel pickled bologna on a bun topped with onions, relish and mustard. But then is it any tougher than managing a half-pound angus burger with all the fixings?

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We rest our case.

At Big City Dogs in Owosso, you could eat a different type of dog every two weeks for a solid year. Koegel's Viennas, skinless wieners, Polish sausage and foot-longs are served there.

In addition to the classic Flint and Detroit coney dogs, the restaurant offers such well-known

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regional variations as Chicago (tomato, onion and pickie spear), New York (sauerkraut, reish and onions) and Philly (grilled mushrooms, Swiss cheese and mayo).

But owners Robin and Rod Bushard claim to have originated the Atlanta (with slaw), Topeka (bacon, lettuce, tomato and mayo), Houston (BBQ sauce, grilled onions and mustard), Santa Fe (guacamole, tomato, onion and sour cream) and the Tijuana (salsa, cheese and sour cream).

Big City Dogs also can present theme dogs with the names of L.A., Honolulu, Georgia, West Virginia, New England, Southwest and Frankenmuth, which is topped with kraut, onion, relish, mustard and ketchup.

Robin Bushard said she is especially proud of the Greektown dog. It is topped with ripe olives, tomatoes, crumbled feta, lettuce and banana peppers.

The business just passed the 2 1/2-year mark, recently relocating from Corunna on courthouse square to 113 S. Washington St. in downtown Owosso.

It is open from 10:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday -Thursday and 10:30 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday. You can review the entire menu at www.bigcitydogs.com.

But one entree dog is missing: A Corunna/Owosso dog. Or maybe it should be a Shiawassee dog.

But the Bushards are taking corrective steps. They have launched a contest to create and name a "hometown" dog.

Robin Bushard said the couple was inspired to open their dog house during a visit to Disney World in Florida. "We saw this stand with all these different toppings and thought it was really a cool idea."

The top sellers? "I would say the Flint coney, of course, and then the Philly, Southwest, Chicago, New York and Atlanta."

If the couple need even more variations, they can pick up a copy of the July Better Homes & Gardens. There, on page 224, is a photo illustration with 10 of its own.

Rather out there are the variations topped with alfalfa and sunflower sprouts and guacamole and one with sliced peaches, scallions and chutney. To each his own.

If the Bushards ever wanted to stage an eating contest, they could set out all 25 different dogs and dare contestants to down them in 12 minutes. That's how long the gluttons at Nathan's Famous get to stuff themselves in the annual contest on New York's Coney Island.

American Joey Chestnut took the mustard yellow title belt at last week's hot dog-eating contest on Coney Island, N.Y., as he downed 66 dogs in 12 minutes.

I'm starting to feel sick.



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