



this is what it's like

Is there a better battle royale than the one that's raged between curiosity and common sense since, oh, a certain fig leaf-wearing someone couldn't leave well enough alone and keep her grubby little paws off the pomegranate? It's the steel-cage death match between two opponents too stubborn—and too interested in bloodying each other up—to recognize how evenly matched they are.

The times that we touch the pan to see if it's as hot as they told us notwithstanding, we tend to know our limits and ignore that obnoxious little voice with the penchant for pushing us to step out onto the ledge—but that doesn't make us any less interested in knowing what it's like to live out there.

And with that in mind, we set out to strike a blow for common sense by asking nearly a dozen St. Louisans (or former St. Louisans) to recount for us their brushes with death, to relive their out-of-the-ordinary experiences, to give us a peek into their extraordinary jobs.

This is what they told us.

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this is what it's like ... to Have a Heart Transplant

by Valerie Hoven, 23, publications coordinator

It's freaky to think that this heart was in someone else's body before, but I think about it more scientifically: What keeps it pumping? And I hope it doesn't stop.

It's kind of sad just to know that you were a failure, to know that you were marked for death. Right after the procedure, I had bouts of depression—serious depression. There are three machines monitoring you, every move you make is being reported back to someone, and I just wanted to be alone so badly.

The most interesting thing about my heart

transplant—and what makes it more sad—is that it happened on Father's Day. My dad got the best Father's Day gift, but a father also lost his child on Father's Day. That's depressing to think about. I never think someone had to die to get me this heart, I just think about how someone lost their child.

The thing that changed me the most, aside from being able to run and breathe, was seeing how people reacted to it. I realize that what I've been through isn't normal and everyone is going to interpret it differently. I feel like I'm judged. I don't tell people because they

THIS IS WHAT IT TASTES LIKE

PIG SNOOT



Crispy's the way to go with snoot. In K.C. they're boiled and barbecued. Here, fried crisp, they achieve culinary greatness. They're smoky, like incredibly rich bacon, with a satisfying crunchiness, and an undercurrent of porky fattiness. Think of them as a thicker, more flavorful version of pork rinds. —*D.L.*

CHICKEN FEET



Al dente though gelatinous, chicken feet are like poultry-flavored noodles, with skin like a chewy, delicate jerky. They're fried first—after the nails are clipped—to puff the meat and tossed in a black bean sauce; the trick is using teeth and tongue to pull apart the joints, sucking the meat and then discreetly spitting out the bony nubbins. —*D.L.*



thisiswhatit'slike ... to Eat 22 Pounds of Pizza in One Week (and Win \$1,500)

by Brian Tournier, 37, bond analyst, and Adam Tournier, 34, physics professor

In 1995, these brothers took on two pizza joints in one week. Their foes: Pointer's 28-inch, 10-pound Pointersaurus (reward: \$500) and Talayna's 30-inch, 12-pound Monster pizza (reward: \$1,000). The brothers remain the only team to complete Talayna's challenge.

BT: The idea was that we would do the Pointersaurus, then use that as sort of a training run for the Talayna's pizza. We had this elaborate game plan: "You gotta go eat really big meals and get your stomach used to having really big meals," we'd say. But when it came down to it, it was like, "Hey you wanna go do that?" "Yeah, let's go."

AT: We went down there and did it and then went to Ted Drewes for custard. The fastest anyone had done it was 54 minutes, and we did it in 35 or 36 minutes. We were halfway done in 15 minutes. They were standing there with their mouths open.

BT: I think that maybe made us a bit cocky about doing the second one. But it was more just kind of brute force: Eat it as fast as you can before your stomach realizes what you're doing to it.

AT: The Talayna's one was oppressive. It was painful. We had an hour, and we did it in 59 minutes and 30 seconds. The owner frisked us, he checked our pockets to make sure we didn't hide any 'cause he did *not* want to give us that check. He was like, "What do I need to do so that no one would ever be able to do this again?"

BT: That was a gut-buster in every sense of the word. There was no laughing, no joking, no ice cream when we were done, just discomfort. The Talayna's is whole-milk cheese—a lot greasier, more difficult to keep down. It got to the point where you had to wash it down, just to be able to get it down.

AT: But the thing was to drink as little fluid as possible, 'cause when the pizza hits your stomach, it's just going to swell, swell, swell. When we did it, the requirement was just the pizza, and now it's like a pitcher of beer or soda and the pizza.

—As told to Margaret Bauer