

The queen of eating shellfish online

Notes & Cues:
Article:

Hundreds of thousands of people tune in each week to watch Bethany Gaskin binge-eat shellfish on YouTube.

Gaskin, 44, has capitalized on the popularity of a food-video genre known as mukbang, which involves scarfing down, on camera, more grub than should rightly be consumed in a single sitting.

On her two YouTube channels, Gaskin chats up her audience while eating king crab legs, mussels, lobster tails, hard-boiled eggs and roasted red potatoes.

Mukbang seems to have begun as an internet trend more than a decade ago in South Korea. The name is a mash-up of the Korean words for let's eat ("muk-ja") and broadcasting ("bang-song"). Korean live-streamers often schedule their mukbang videos to align with dinnertime hours, so their viewers eating alone at home feel like they're sharing a meal with a friend.

Viewers cite other benefits too. Watching the videos can serve as an appetite-curbing exercise.

Though the chatter around mukbang videos tends to focus on their benefits, there are also some who see reason for concern. Theresa Kinsella, 42, a dietitian, said in a phone interview that these videos "glorify overeating, " promote disordered eating and ignore the possible risks associated with overconsumption.

"The short-term health risks are physical discomfort, gastrointestinal distress, lethargy and fatigue, " Kinsella said. As for the long-term effects, she cited weight gain, heart disease and diabetes.

Summary: