



The International Federation of Competitive Eating (IFOCE) was formed in 1997 to unify the many eating competitions held around the world. IFOCE safety rules require that competitive eaters be at least 18 years old, and they strongly discourage any kind of training or practice at home, insisting that competitive eating is only safe in a controlled environment. IFOCE competitions are judged by the amount eaten within a set period of time, traditionally 10 or 12 minutes.

The food to be eaten is either weighed, like cabbage, or cut into uniform pieces, in the case of a pizza-eating contest, for example. No one is allowed to start eating until an official gives the signal. Competitors can eat the food however they want, either breaking it into pieces or just shoving it in. They can dip the food into a liquid (usually water) to make it softer. If the food has different parts, the parts do not have to be eaten together. For example, hot dogs can be eaten separately from their buns. When time expires, any food that is already in the contestant's mouth counts as eaten as long as he or she eventually swallows it.

What happens if someone vomits? International Federation of Competitive Eating (IFOCE) rules are very clear, though they are very delicate about the terms that they use to describe someone throwing up. Anyone who suffers "a Roman incident" is disqualified if the result of that incident touches the plate or table. Once time has expired, competitors can rid themselves of the massive amount of food they've just eaten however they like.

**Designate specific people to do certain jobs during the contest.** There should be one person assigned to each contestant to count the number of food items each person eats. Designate someone to give the contestants more food items, if they are needed. One "supplier" to every two or three contestants should be sufficient. Of course, have a "bucket person" assigned to no more than three contestants in case of vomiting. Be sure to have at least one person trained in CPR and first aid or have emergency medical technician on site, in case of choking or any other medical problems. This person will have to be given the authority to stop the contestant or the contest if he deems it necessary for safety reasons. Also, assign people on hand who will take photos or tape the contest.

**Try to be prepared for everything and anything.** You can't foresee every possible problem, but think like an alarmist to be sure your bases are covered. If the unthinkable happens, remain calm and collected. Handle problems quickly and quietly so your guests do not panic. Do not hesitate to call 911 if a medial situation arises.

