

## CALGARY STAMPEDE

## World's fastest flippin' and flappin'

Canadian Food Network host sets Guinness record for tossing 559 flapjacks in an hour

BY DAWN WALTON CALGARY

At the halfway mark, Bob Blumer had cooked 184 pancakes that met the unflinching standards of a Guinness World Record, but he was nowhere near a title-claiming pace.

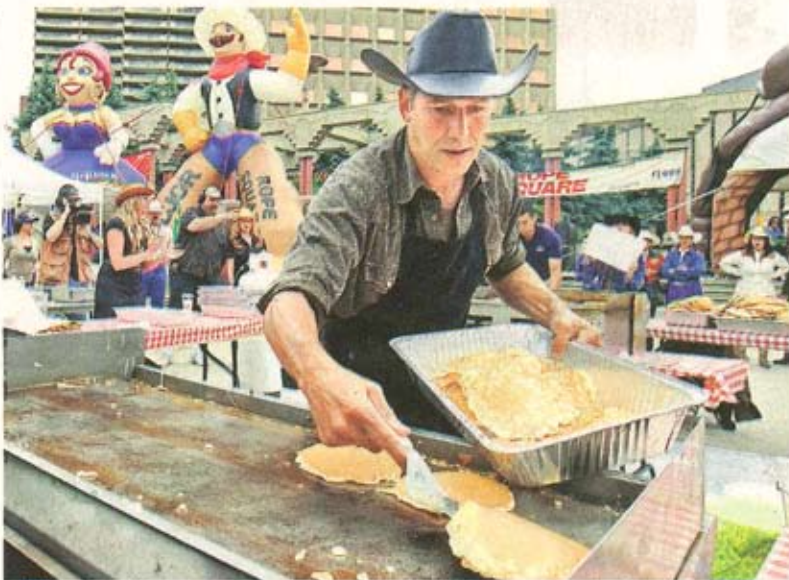
The host of the Food Network Canada show *Glutton for Punishment* was dripping with sweat, his flipping arm was aching and, 30 minutes into it, he was grimly hanging on to his spatula yesterday, hoping to surpass the record 555 pancakes cooked by an individual in one hour as judged by the pre-eminent keeper of achievements, no matter how impressive or ridiculous.

Mr. Blumer, who takes on food-related challenges around the world - including grape-picking in Germany and oyster-shucking in Virginia - trekked to the Calgary Stampede, famous for its pancake breakfasts, for training and preparation before his latest epicurean feat.

"I hadn't flipped more than enough pancakes for my own breakfast in my life," said the native Montrealer, who now lives in Los Angeles. "I got here the first day I was flippin', I was floppin', I was bur-nin', I was missin' and these guys helped me out."

Ben Leblanc, the 30-year-old kitchen manager at Nellie's, a local breakfast institution, acted as his personal trainer and mentor. He also created the ideal recipe for cooking contest batter: Use cake flour and cut back on the sugar. That way the flapjacks won't burn as fast and will take a little longer to cook, giving Mr. Blumer the perfect pace to run between griddles and buckets of batter.

"It took us a couple of trial and errors and we figured it out, changed a few things and bam!" said Mr. Leblanc (in homage to Emeril Lagasse, another television foodie, who made "bam!" his catchphrase).



Celebrity chef Bob Blumer flips pancakes at the Calgary Stampede yesterday. The *Glutton for Punishment* host beat the last record by just four flapjacks. CHRIS BOLIN FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

For 60 minutes, Mr. Leblanc stood in front of the competition griddle shouting words of encouragement: "Just focus. You've got to focus. This is it, right here."

To beat the record, Mr. Blumer would have to cook 9.3 pancakes per minute.

Early on, Mr. Blumer couldn't get the proper temperature on the massive griddles positioned around him. He also gave up on the two cookers set up behind to work the ones up front. The flapjacks weren't cooking quite right.

His technique wasn't honed. Then, he swept away crumbs, applied fresh cooking oil with a squeeze, perfected the batter pour and was flipping like a pro.

"I finally caught my groove," Mr. Blumer told the crowd with just 18 minutes left to make his mark. "I hope it's not too late."

By then, with ruler in hand,

Danny Girton Jr., Guinness's North American adjudication executive, counted 289 pancakes that were at least 12.7 centimetres in diameter and were no more than a centimetre thick.

A growing pile of rejected pancakes - the ones that were too small or undercooked - sat in a bin on the ground.

"All of the pancakes had to be made from scratch with traditional ingredients including water, flour, salt, sugar. No Bisquick, pre-made mixes," Mr. Girton said.

"Bob had to mix and crack all the eggs. All of the ingredients had to be prepared in a hygienic manner."

A health inspector was on site to oversee the challenge, but these were not the type of pancakes anyone would want to eat.

With two minutes left, 450 pancakes had been officially tallied. As the cheering crowd

counted down the clock to zero, Mr. Blumer tossed his cowboy hat in the air and nervously waited for the official word.

"I pretty well gave it everything I could. I don't think I could have done anything any differently. Wow, I sound like Mike Tyson, don't I?" he told the crowd.

Worried he was about to fall short, Mr. Blumer began picking through the rejection bin.

"Am I allowed to check through these for re-evaluation?" he asked.

Mr. Girton measured and counted the final 11. He rejected one.

The final tally: 559.

Mr. Blumer owns a new world record, beating the old one by four pancakes.

"I can't believe it," he said, still shaking and covered in sweat-soaked batter.

"The only thing tougher than bull-riding in this town is flipping flapjacks."