

BEST KNOWN CANNIBALS OF MODERN TIMES

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Best Known Cannibals of Modern Times

With the aim of continuing living, a person should eat, and meat products are often included in one's daily diet. Whereas consuming the meat of animals or birds define a person as a carnivore, consuming the flesh of another person is defined as cannibalism or eating a representative of one's own species. Those who are involved in studying law, legislative systems, and legal loopholes might find it interesting that eating people is not punished by the law. The ethical point of view on consuming human flesh has an unequivocal position: it is morally abnormal and deviant behavior. The legal point of view stipulates that an individual who consumes the flesh of another person could be convicted only for murder (if it has been proven) or a violation of the peace of the deceased if the legislative aspect of a particular country includes this as a crime. Thus, legal loopholes, curiosity, or a desire to survive lead to the appearance of cannibals, and many of them could be a plot for thriller/horror movies and a headache for lawyers, as they start or continue their immoral practice within the framework of modern reality.

The story of Jeffrey Dahmer is an episode covering the struggle between insanity and the conscious perception of deeds. Dahmer is known for killing at least seventeen people, but particular attention to the committed actions is kept because of his motives. The serial killer suffered from a psychological disorder; he had demonstrated his psychopathy since childhood, when he had a habit of collecting bones and carcasses of dead animals.¹ Another aspect aggravating the condition of his mental stability was his homosexual intentions and sexual fantasies related to his abnormal passion for death. Eventually, Jeffrey Dahmer decided to fulfill them by murdering his sexual interests, dismembering their bodies, and trying to understand how

¹ Paoletti, Gabe. "'I Knew I Was Sick': The Chilling Story of Cannibal Serial Killer Jeffrey Dahmer." *All That's Interesting*. July 25, 2018. Accessed August 22, 2018. <https://allthatsinteresting.com/jeffrey-dahmer>.

to preserve their parts. After an episode when he had tried to preserve a head by drying it out with the help of an oven, the head exploded, and Jeffrey decided to use a refrigerator, where he could save the dismembered parts and eat them. The photographs depicting parts of human bodies as crime scene evidence are available for everyone if there is a desire to be acquainted with the scope of Dahmer's criminal actions.

Germany is a country that has a story of a famous cannibal as well. The name of this killer is Armin Meiwes, and in an interview with him, he confessed what the taste of human meat is: like pork but stronger.² It is possible to assume that the urge to taste it appeared while Meiwes was a child: being a 5-year-old boy, he witnessed how his father left his family, and later with his mother's death, Armin was detached from the world and found reconciliation on the Internet and chat rooms dedicated to cannibalism.³ This social activity turned into roleplaying and Armin Meiwes met people from chatrooms. There was no incident of cannibalism until Armin met his lover and, at the same time, a man who voluntarily offered himself as a victim. That man, Bernd Brandes, was the only victim of the German cannibal, but he made Armin infamous in the criminal world: Meiwes gave a detailed description of the process and his feelings in the interview during the trial.⁴ Apart from being a famous modern cannibal, Armin Meiwes became a subject of sexological investigations (namely, a specific form of fetish). Currently, Armin is imprisoned for life for manslaughter; a murder, as it is stated by the accusation, but there is no mention of it being legally accused of cannibalism.

² O'Connor, Roisin. "The Man Who Cooked and Ate His Lover." *The Independent*. February 09, 2016. Accessed August 22, 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/armin-meiwes-interview-with-a-cannibal-documentary-sheds-new-light-on-one-of-germany-s-most-infamous-a6863201.html>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ O'Connor, Roisin. "The Man Who Cooked and Ate His Lover." *The Independent*. February 09, 2016. Accessed August 22, 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/armin-meiwes-interview-with-a-cannibal-documentary-sheds-new-light-on-one-of-germany-s-most-infamous-a6863201.html>.

One can consider Jeffrey Dahmer and Armin Meiwes as appalling examples of modern cannibals, but it is crucial to mention a man from Japan, Issei Sagawa, who tried to repress his desires for almost all of his life and failed in this attempt. Adolescence is a period when young men and women have many sexual desires because of hormones, but unlike his peers, Issei Sagawa had thoughts of another kind when he was looking at a female body: he wondered what it would be like to taste a girl's flesh.⁵ After 32 years of inner struggle, Sagawa found his perfect victim, and after a confession, he should have been brought to a mental hospital. It is also a part that should be mentioned as an example of legal loopholes: Issei Sagawa was charged in France, and the court ordered to deport him to Japan and held him in a mental hospital, but the Japanese legislative system had no right to give the same charges, because documents were sealed in France.⁶ In Japan, Issei Sagawa is still free, and he even wrote a book to make the world stop thinking about him as the monster.

This brief list of famous modern cannibals would not be full without the mention of the "cannibal couple" Natalia Baksheeva and Dmitry Baksheev from Russia. Moreover, people would not have known about them if they did not accidentally lose their cell phone. It was found by workers fixing a road in Krasnodar.⁷ The phone was discarded, but there still was an opportunity to check the photos to find the owners: they were found, and the world received yet another story of people who differ from the image that they create. Natalia and Dmitry were not

⁵ Serena, Katie. "This Cannibal Killer Is Walking Free and Plans to Eat Humans Again." *All That's Interesting*. July 09, 2018. Accessed August 22, 2018. <https://allthatsinteresting.com/issei-sagawa>.

⁶ Serena, Katie. "This Cannibal Killer Is Walking Free and Plans to Eat Humans Again." *All That's Interesting*. July 09, 2018. Accessed August 22, 2018. <https://allthatsinteresting.com/issei-sagawa>.

⁷ Wootson, Cleve R., Jr. "Russian 'cannibal Couple' May Have Drugged, Killed and Eaten as Many as 30 People, Police Say." *The Washington Post*. September 26, 2017. Accessed August 22, 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/09/26/russian-cannibal-couple-may-have-drugged-killed-and-eaten-as-many-as-30-people-police-say/?noredirect=on>

a suspicious family, but when the public received access to their photographs, it became known that the Russian cannibal couple had murdered, dismembered, and ate at least 30 people since 1999.⁸ Considering Hollywood's tendency to release movies based on real-life stories, Natalia and Dmitry Baksheev might become icons of the horror industry.

The conducted research with the aim of studying the best-known cannibals of modern times includes not only informational satiation, but also an explicit understanding that intentional cases are mostly based on psychological disorders and behavioral deviations. Whereas the case of the Russian cannibals has been discovered too recently to make definitive statements, the stories of Jeffrey Dahmer, Armin Meiwes, and Issei Sagawa demonstrate a clear pattern of psychological issues traced since their childhoods. At the same time, it is possible to learn that an accusation conducted in one country might be canceled in the country of the murder's origin because of legal loopholes. However, the most important thing is to think critically about whether or not the global legislative system needs amendments related to cannibalism cases, since it is morally wrong. Yet, a person could be accused of murder only.

⁸ Ibid.

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