



Eating and nothingness.

Seinfeld: Consumed

By MATTHEW JAFFE
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

"Homey!"

I knew it was Mackey. Nobody else calls me Homey. Nobody else calls me at 3:42 a.m.

"Homey, listen up. 'Seinfeld' is done after this year. Now I've got a question for you. What has that show always been about?"

Even for Mackey, a man so serious about television that he refuses to watch post-Dick York episodes of "Bewitched" ("We all know there's only one Darrin Stevens"), this seemed a most bizarre question. Especially because it's well known throughout the pop mis-asma that "Seinfeld" is, in fact, about nothing.

So I answered, "If it's not about nothing, it's gotta be about sex."

He sighed deeply.

"So, so predictable. You're not taking this seriously, are you?"

"OK, give me a clue, Mackey."

"Bobka."

"Give me another one, please."

"The marble-rye episode when Jerry steals one from an old lady to help out George. The Soup Nazi show when he chooses a crab bisque over his girlfriend. The Junior Mint in the operating room! Do I have to spell it out for you?"

"Please."

"Seinfeld isn't about nothing. It's about food. F-O-O-D!"

Now we were both quiet. In the background I could hear an episode of "The Facts of Life." He was headed

for a major TV bender.

"Mackey, it's 3:45 in the morning."

"Work with me. Remember when Kramer got banned from the fruit stand? Or the chicken he kept so he could have fresh eggs? Or how about when he snuck the latte into the theater?"

"Technically, that would be a beverage."

"Perhaps. My point is that here's the most successful show of the 1990s, and its singular theme is food. That's always been its secret."

I hated to admit it, but Mackey might be onto something. Food certainly seemed to be the driving force in the characters' lives. Jerry pretending to eat mutton to prove his manhood. George and the Kung Pao chicken episode. Elaine with her big salads. Newman fantasizing about eating Kramer, for God's sake. There's never been a show that has so frequently (and neurotically) used food as a plot device. Not that there's anything wrong with it.

"OK, Mackey. Maybe you're right. But so what?"

"It means everything. Everything. We walk into a network and explain this, and we'll have parking spaces by the end of the day. All these damn ensemble shows that copied 'Seinfeld.' They don't work. And you know why?"

"Because 'The Single Guy' didn't eat enough?"

"Exactly. But us? We're movin' on up to the grown-up's table. We are moving on up. We'll finally get a piece of the pie."

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