



## Behind The Scenes With YouTube's Tiniest Star: Tiny Hamster

Find out some of the secrets behind the making of those adorable Tiny Hamster videos!

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With several viral videos totaling almost 26 million views and more than 124,000 subscribers on YouTube, it is difficult to ignore the insane popularity (and cuteness) of Tiny Hamster.

The masterminds behind Tiny Hamster are Joel Jensen, Joe Matsushima and Amy Matsushima. They're the creative force behind Denizen, a small content company that makes branded videos.

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When the concept of a burrito-eating [hamster](#) was pitched to one company, it was rejected. However, the trio believed in the idea and knew they were on to something.

So they went ahead and made "Tiny Hamster Eating Tiny Burritos" anyway. The video instantaneously went viral, and YouTube crowned its newest tiny star.

SmallAnimalChannel.com recently caught up with Joel Jensen, who told us what it's like working with such tiny performers and what goes into creating each episode.

He shared his reaction to Tiny Hamster's celebrity fans, among them movie star, Sharon Stone, and legendary competitive eater, Kobayashi.

Jensen also revealed what's next for Tiny Hamster — a children's book and a new video.

### **So, it all started with a burrito?**

**JJ:** "Tiny Hamster Eating Tiny Burritos" came from an idea we pitched to a frozen burrito company, and they passed on it. They thought it was a little too uncertain and a little too out there. They wanted to stick with something a little bit safer.

"Tiny Hamster Eating Tiny Burritos" was one of our very favorite ideas that we had.

I remember saying: "Even if people don't share this, we should still make it because I think this will work and anybody who sees it will probably like it." That was as far as any expectations we had.

We knew it was going to be something big because as soon as we uploaded it, it almost immediately started going bananas. I think, within a day, it had been almost on every website we had ever wanted it to be on.

We started getting phone calls from "Good Morning America" and John Oliver's TV show. It was pretty quick, and we were stunned by just how quickly it got that big.



Via [HelloDenizen/YouTube](#)

Although food looks like cake or other yummy items, it is made from ingredients safe for the pets to eat (and still yummy).

### **For the videos, how does one actually go about making tiny burritos or the little birthday cakes we saw in "Tiny Birthday For A Tiny Hedgehog?"**

**JJ:** We work with food stylists who make and build the small food items to look like real-life food that the hamsters will enjoy eating. They're made from ingredients that are safe and healthy for the hamsters.

We have to go back and forth quite a bit and do a lot of trial and error to see what is going to work and to see what the hamsters are going to like. We make sure our trainers sign off on it so that the hamsters stay healthy.

For example, the burrito actually ended up being made out of wonton wrappers filled with raisins and lettuce. The cake from the birthday episode was made out of applesauce, bananas and rice flour. The frosting was sugar-free yogurt dyed with beet juice.

### **What is it like working with such tiny performers?**

**JJ:** On an actual shoot day, we are usually shooting a full 10 to 12 hour day. We work really closely with professional trainers, and they're the ones that the hamsters live with.

Over the course of the several weeks leading up to the shoot, the hamsters are trained to do whatever physical tasks that we'll need them to do. That could be walking up to a table, sitting on the chair or sitting in a gondola like they did for the "Tiny Hamster's Tiny Date."

### **What species is Tiny Hamster?**

**JJ:** Tiny Hamster is a Syrian hamster. In "Tiny Hamster's Tiny Date," where we had the two of them in the gondola together, we had a lot of comments saying that Syrian hamsters need to be solitary because we they're not very friendly to each other.

However, it's really a matter of our trainers having a lot of expertise. It also depends on their upbringing, how they're raised and their sociability. So it's really interesting working with the hamsters, because even with different hamsters, some hamsters are really more social than others.

### **What about the bunny in "Fuzzy Bunny Is A Fighter Pilot?"**

**JJ:** Fuzzy Bunny's first appearance was in the "A Tiny Hamster Thanksgiving." We wanted to do a Thanksgiving episode, and we wanted to create a sense of family and togetherness.

So we decided to use different tiny animals all coming together for a Thanksgiving meal. Our trainer suggested that we use a Lionhead rabbit because they're easy to work with and really cute.

Fuzzy Bunny is really great, sweet and docile. She's pretty relaxed all the time and just kind of sits there and makes it easy for us.



Via [HelloDenizen/YouTube](#)

Hot dog eating champion Kobayashi appeared in a video that had Tiny Hamster battling for a hot dog eating prize.

### **Tiny Hamster caught the attention of a few celebrities. What was it like working with Kobayashi?**

**JJ:** He is amazing, so sweet and was so generous with his time. He's a real legend and has been a big deal for about 10 years in competitive eating. We've been fans of his for a long time.

We put out two episodes of Tiny Hamster, and we asked our fans for ideas of what they want to see. We had gotten suggestions about hot dogs. We thought that could be cool because a hot dog-eating contest is pretty iconic.

We wondered how we could do the best possible version of Tiny Hamster eating hot dogs. Joe and I both had the thought at the same time: "What if we can get Kobayashi to do this?"

We didn't want to get our hopes up, but we emailed him. His manager got back to us, and we couldn't believe it. They were fans of our other videos and when he came out to Los Angeles, we did everything we could to make it work.

Sure enough, it did and he was wonderful, and I can't speak highly enough of him.

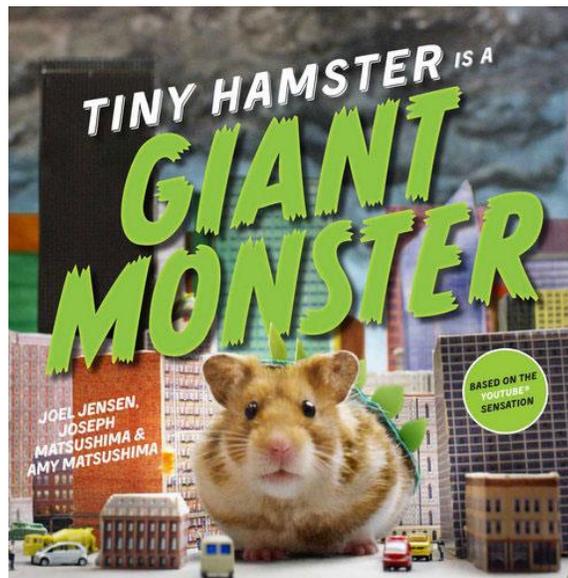
You were up for a Webby Award in the Online Film & Video – Viral category and won the [People's Voice Award](#). On Twitter, Sharon Stone tweeted about Tiny Hamster: "the cutest video ever...Our Favorite."

JJ: That's crazy, and I don't even know how that happened.

**So what's next for Tiny Hamster?**

JJ: We have a children's book coming out on June 2 by Simon and Shuster. The book's title is "[Tiny Hamster Is A Giant Monster](#)," and it's based off a video that will be coming out that same day.

The story is similar to Godzilla because Tiny Hamster eats some evil green ooze and becomes a giant monster. He then goes around a mini city eating different things before he shrinks back down.



*Courtesy of Simon & Schuster*

The book "Tiny Hamster Is A Giant Monster" is scheduled to be released on June 2, 2015.

<http://www.smallanimalchannel.com/critter-exclusives/behind-the-scenes-with-youtubes-tiniest-star-tiny-hamster-1505.aspx>