

## THE TASTE OF ADULTHOOD

## INTRODUCING MY SISTER TO THE JOYS OF WINE: A TALE OF SUSPENSE.

BY RACHEL EDDEY

The greatest (by which I mean, finest) shock of my adult life came on my sister's recent 30th birthday. As we made our way to dinner, Elana told me, in a casual tone, that she wanted a glass of wine with her meal. Elana had never had a glass of wine in her life.

She'd also never had a beer, mixed drink or shot. It wasn't medical or religious reasons. She simply wasn't—as she says—born with the urge. She had always opted out of it at parties, happy hours, weddings and barbecues. She was now ready to try it, and the pressure was on me to find the perfect gateway glass.

I knew I couldn't replicate my own experience. My first full glass of wine came when I turned 21, seven years earlier. I can't recall the name of the wine; I only remember that it was boxed and terrible. But it was enough to compel me to learn more. I tried conventional methods, such as attending tastings. And idiosyncratic ones: I wasn't above standing in the middle of a wine store with a pointed finger, begging the cashier to spin me in dizzying circles. (Only one agreed. This is how I discovered Shiraz.) I had learned my favorite drinks through both method and madness.

Now, in my appointment as Elana's personal sommelier, I would have to cash in on all that field research.

The most practical approach, I decided, was to think about the makeup of wine, element by element. Since Elana and I have similar food palates—we both hate spinach, strange-sounding meat products and all types of olives—it seemed like a manageable task.

Let the internal brainstorming begin. *She would prefer sweet over dry, for sure, but how sweet? Off-dry Riesling sweet, not ice wine sweet. The acidity level would have to be low. Tannins too: grippy, drying tannins would turn her off, especially if we got our*

*drinks before the appetizers. Oh, and don't disregard color. A plum-dark red might suck the festive air right out of the room, but is a white or rosé too spritzer-like? Not taking her wishes seriously?*

*But do I want to trick her or do I want to make her a believer? And, if I decide to make her a believer, could I do it in time to catch our movie?*

I was debating whether a Zinfandel would be too massive and spicy as Elana and I entered the restaurant and sat in a booth. The waitress appeared instantly. I had to make a choice, and I had to make it now. I tucked practicality under my dinner napkin and willed myself to forget about the nuances of taste. Instead, I posed a simple question to myself: what wine makes you the happiest? The answer was equally as simple: rosé Sangria. It was a little bit country, a little bit rock 'n roll—and, I thought, a great introduction for a newbie. I ordered us a pitcher.

When it arrived, the waitress poured our glasses. I waited for Elana. She took a sip. Her face did not change as she let the liquid slip down her throat. And then, in seemingly slow motion, she smiled.

"I love it!" she cried, taking another gulp. I released the breath I hadn't realized I was holding. I knew it would have been okay if she'd declared it terrible. We would have tried something else. But finding an area in which I, the younger sister, could educate Elana, the older sister, tasted sweeter than the Sangria itself.

"To turning 30!" I bellowed, holding up my own glass. And, for the first time in our lives, we toasted. **WB**

