

Sawbones 281: Wine

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Intro (Clint McElroy): Sawbones is a show about medical history, and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion. It's for fun. Can't you just have fun for an hour, and not try to diagnose your mystery boil? We think you've earned it. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy a moment of distraction from that weird growth. You're worth it.

[theme music plays]

Justin: Hello, everybody, and welcome to Sawbones, a marital tour of misguided medicine. I'm your cohost, Justin McElroy!

[audience cheers]

Sydnee: And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

[audience cheers louder, continues cheering]

Justin: No, no, no, it's fine. It's fine. Stop. It's fine, it's fine. It's fine. It's fine. I'm laughing on the outside.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: You know Pagliacci, the clown? The sad clown?

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: That's why he cried. 'Cause his wife got more applause than I did— anyway, um, hi. And welcome to Sawbones, a marital tour of misguided medicine. Um, I'm still Justin McElroy. That's still the Sydster. And uh, we're here in California.

[audience cheers]

Justin: More specifically San Jose, which as I understand it is near the Santa Cruz mountains, if I...

[audience cheers]

Justin: And that, my friends, that's wine country.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: I know what you're thinking. Doesn't the J-man normally drink uh, horse's neck, which is brandy and ginger ale, with a little bit of bitters, and the answer is, used to. But now, I'm a wine guy. Folks, I'm here to tell you this is my 87th glass of wine in my entire life.

Sydnee: It's really a very recent— recent thing.

Justin: Very recent.

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: Very recent. I mean, it's been a few months, but this is the 87th glass I've had.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Uh, to give you sort of a um, idea of how I am in the scene. Um, but here we— we're here in wine country, Santa Cruz mountains, mainly for a, say it with me, four different...

Sydnee: Four diff... [stammers]

Justin: It's pinot noir...

Sydnee: Noir...

Justin: ...cabernet, sauvignon...

Sydnee: [slurring] ...cabernet, sauvignon...

Justin: Chardonnay.

Sydnee: Chardonnay.

Justin: And... et cetera. The other— the rest is like, et cetera.

Sydnee: [laughs] I don't know anything about wine.

Justin: Yeah. I read something about the Santa Cruz mountain region on Wikipedia before we came out. Just about your wine growing. Uh, it's an extremely beautiful country up there. Uh, I could see from the streets. Assuming that large elevation is the Santa Cruz mountains. Now, folks, listen... I'm not an atlas.

Sydnee: Now, I don't know anything about different types of wine and what's good or not, 'cause like I said, I drink beer, but I do know about medicine and medical history, and I know that for as long as humans have been making wine, really any alcohol, but wine specifically, we have been trying to find a reason to drink it [laughs] other than that we like it. And especially a reason that it might be good for us.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: So I do want to share with you the history of wine as medicine, especially in the ancient world, because they put wine... I mean, everywhere. [laughs]

[audience laughs, cheers]

Sydnee: Like everywhere.

Justin: Gross.

Sydnee: Are you ready for the—

[audience laughs]

Justin: Sounds gro— you make it sound gross.

Sydnee: Uh, we have— we as humans have been making wine since like the Neolithic period. They found, like, traces of wine in like jars and pots and things. But at least since the Egyptians, we have been trying to find a medicinal value to wine. A reason that we can convince everybody, like, "Oh, it's not just for fun, though. It's for my health." [laughs]

Justin: I need this.

Sydnee: It's for good. Um, in ancient Egypt, wine was viewed as both a beverage and a food. It had nutritional value. [laughs]

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: Which I mean...

Justin: Go ahead and download Uber now, just so you're like...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: ...just so you're like, ready. We don't need to take any unnecessary risks.

Sydnee: Uh, and I think that's kind of fair in the sense that, like, wine is from grapes, and I always argue that beer, it's just like bread. Like, it's just like a side of bread with my meal. So... like a fruit. [laughs]

Justin: That's— you're talking like people with a problem talks, Syd...

Sydnee: So they would use wine sometimes just with like—

Justin: "It's just with a side of bread."

Sydnee: [laughs] Side of bread. Just like as a solvent, or like a way to disguise the bad taste of a medicine. It was very popular for that. But then in addition to that, they also thought it was good for you just in and of itself.

Some uses for wine, um, it might be good for a cough. It was a popular cough syrup. Just drink some wine if you've got a cough. If your appetite has gone, if you need to restore your appetite, wine was a good [laughs] appetite restorer. [laughs] Uh, they used it for...

Justin: That I can vouch for. I've had a lot of— I've had a lot of late-night bowls of Froot Loops that will attest to...

Sydnee: [laughing]

Justin: ...defo, defo does that.

Sydnee: Uh, they used it for fevers, they used it for wounds a lot. Um, both drinking wine if you got a wound, I think just 'cause like, "Oh, man, you got a wound."

Justin: "Here."

Sydnee: "Here. Here's some wine." Uh, and also for like, soaking bandages in and dressing wounds with wine, or flushing a wound out. Generally, it was thought to clean things. And this was before any idea of, like, "We're killing germs" would've been behind it. It was more just like, "Eh, probably cleans it out." So... [laughs]

And it was also, as it was written, it was good for releasing a child from the belly of a woman, which basically meant...

Justin: What is it, like, a lubricant? Like... [laughs]

Sydnee: No. [laughs]

Justin: Oh, no, no, no. It was bait. "Come on out, baby! It's time to party, baby. Baby, let's get crunk. Get out here, baby."

Sydnee: No, it was more— it was more, like, a person who is in labor, like, "Hey. Do you maybe want a drink? [laughs] That looks painful. [laughs] Hey."

Justin: "Hey."

Sydnee: "How 'bout some wine?"

Justin: "We're a few— we're a couple millennia from anesthesia. Um..."

Sydnee: "Wine?" Um, largely, it was reserved for nobility. So uh, the common people would stick with beer. So I guess that's me.

[scattered audience cheers]

Sydnee: But royalty...

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: Royalty would drink wine.

Justin: I am— I am the son of 1998's funniest man in the Tri State, so kind of like a...

[audience cheers]

Sydnee: Huntington royalty.

Justin: ...a prince of comedy, I guess you could say.

Sydnee: [laughs] My prince of West Virginia.

Justin: A prince of West Virginia.

Sydnee: So— and the uh— during feasts, they would allow everybody to drink wine during feasts, and like, big— the festivals of the gods. There were certain times of the year where everybody would, like, get access to the good stuff, and everybody would be able to drink wine.

And they didn't really have a problem with drunkenness, and we'll see this shift later in ancient history. Uh, for the Egyptians, drunkenness was just a

sign that like, you were happy, and [laughs] you were filled with joy, and you...

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: ...and also, you must have had means to buy the wine, so like [clicks tongue] good on ya. A successful day at the office.

Justin: Good job.

Sydnee: They actually had, once a year, a festival of intoxication.

[audience laughs, scattered cheers]

Justin: We call it spring break these days.

Sydnee: And this is a departure, a little bit, from medical history, but I just like this story: the festival of intoxication was to celebrate a goddess, Sekhmet, who was set to destroy a bunch of humans who were not like, being appropriately... they weren't worthy of Ra. And so Ra was like, "You need to kill those mortals."

So Sekhmet came down to kill a bunch of mortals, and her bloodlust took over, and she just started murdering all the humans, and in order to stop her, they put some wine out, and since it looked like blood, it tricked her. And so she got really drunk, and then felt really happy, and so she was like, "All right. I'll let the rest of you all live."

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: So it's to celebrate the time that all of humanity did not get destroyed; they get really drunk.

Justin: I have actually pulled that stunt on Sydnee before, if I mess up bad enough. So that it's actually— I can vouch for this strategy.

Sydnee: [laughs] There was even— one temple had [laughs] what was called the porch of drunkenness.

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: You just hang out on the porch of drunkenness.

Justin: It's a Phi Kappa Sig house.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: Uh, as we move into ancient Greece, the Greeks were at least aware that, you know, wine is great, we love it, we're all about it...

Justin: Crazy about the stuff.

Sydnee: ...but there are some problems with drinking a lot of it. They'd begun to see that, like, intoxication wasn't always a good thing, and that drinking too much wine could cause some health problems.

Now, that didn't mean that they didn't still use it as medicine. Hippocrates saw many uses for wine in various health problems, and all of the doctors that kind of studied in his tradition also advised the same thing.

Um, he thought that wine mainly affected two parts of the body. Uh, the first would be the head, and that makes sense; you get drunk, intoxication. So it affects the brain, the head. Uh, the other was the "lower cavity."
[laughs]

Justin: Go on.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: Uh, by warming it. [laughs] And— [laughs] it's really just the abdomen. I know, it sounds a lot sexier than the—

Justin: I don't think "sexier" means what you think it means, Syd.

Sydnee: [laughs] It doesn't mean lower cavity?

Justin: No, ma'am. No, ma'am, it doesn't.

Sydnee: Uh, so wine generally was seen as a hot and dry substance. And this is in the— the humeral system of medicine. So basically, you have four humors, we have to keep them in balance, and the way we balance them is by eating and drinking certain things, or puking or peeing or, you know, taking a laxative, that kind of thing. And wine was something that was hot and dry, so if you had some sort of health condition that was seen as cold and wet, wine would fix that. [laughs] So in—

Justin: Because it's hot and dry. This is easy. Come on, folks!

Sydnee: And they also thought it was good if you needed a laxative, because if you drink enough wine, you get diarrhea, apparently, in Greece.

Justin: This one's legit, folks.

Sydnee: [laughs]

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: Now, it was very specific, the usefulness of wine, exactly what you should use it for, and who should drink it, and how much, it really varied on the types of wine that— by this point, we have lots of different types of wine. I mean, I imagine wine is beyond just white and red. Justin, my wine expert...

Justin: Mm-hmm. Uh, yes. For my 89th glass of wine...

Sydnee: Uh-huh.

Justin: ...I am planning on having a red, and there's different kinds of reds.

Sydnee: [laughs] Good job. So— [laughs]

Justin: Thus closes the wine segment of our program.

Sydnee: So based on the color or the taste, or the odor, or the— where it came from, you know, where it was made, it would have certain medicinal properties that were good or bad. Um, everyone pretty much agreed that kids don't benefit [laughs] as much from wine.

[audience laughs]

Justin: They don't benefit... as much.

Sydnee: That's exactly right. So they said, "You know, we gotta be careful. Wine is a very potent beverage, and we have to be careful with it in children, so just mix it with a lot of water when you give it to your kid."

Um, they agreed that the elderly benefit the most from wine.

Justin: Correct.

Sydnee: And by elderly, I do mean over 30, so... [laughs]

Justin: Folks...

[audience cheers]

Justin: It was a r— it was a rough time, okay?

Sydnee: [laughs] People with cold constitutions— 'cause in the humeral system of medicine, not only were certain things able to influence your body, but you also had like, a natural temperament. You know, you were naturally either hot or cold. You were naturally either dry or wet. [laughs] And people who were just cold people were thought to benefit more from wine. Somebody who's like, a phlegmatic person...

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: ...would be— that— and these were the different, like, humeral personalities. Would be a very cold and wet person, and people who were

from cold places. Uh, women were seen as being more wet and cold...
[laughs] So...

Justin: Qui— okay. I'm gonna stay perfectly motionless. Just let me know when she's moved on.

Sydnee: So they were advised to drink wine more than men. You know.

[scattered audience cheers]

Sydnee: [laughs] Some other particular— you can move, now.

Justin: Okay. [relieved] Pshew. All right.

Sydnee: Some other particular uses, uh, dark wine was thought to— let's say that uh, a couple is trying to conceive, and uh, you want to make sure that the baby is strong. A very strong baby. Then uh, the man drinking dark wine was supposed to be very helpful for that.

It was also supposed to be specifically darker wine is good for nosebleeds. It was thought to kind of replace... the blood. [laughs]

[audience laughs]

Justin: Makes sense.

Sydnee: Uh, it was also good for if you, let's say, as a doctor, you bled somebody. Because that was a popular treatment of the time, right? Any illness, we'll just bleed you. We'll cut you and let some blood out, and then you'll be better. But maybe you took it too far. [laughs]

Justin: Oh, no!

Sydnee: And the person passed out, or...

Justin: Coward.

Sydnee: ...almost died. [laughs] Then give him some wine. And it really was thought, like, it kind of looks like blood, this probably helps you make blood.

Justin: Probably. I don't know.

Sydnee: So...

[theme music plays]

Justin: Folks, I am just pleased as punch. Hey, it's Justin McElroy. I'm breaking into my own podcast. It's legal. Check the constitution.

Uh, I am so excited about our first sponsor this week. Brand-new sponsor to Sawbones that I think you're really going to love. Uh, it's called Shady Rays. Now, should you normally buy from a business that has "shady" right in the name? No. But these are good eggs; I can promise you that.

Uh, it's an independent sunglasses company, and they want to do it a little differently, and give you more bang for the buck. They have nice, polarized sunglasses uh, to hold up to no matter what you do outside, and it's at a reasonable price.

They also have, this is great, the best warranty in uh, in all of eyewear. You know, here's the short version from me to you, a fellow human being just like yourself. They're good sunglasses. There's uh, free replacements if shades are lost or broken for any reason. It doesn't matter what happens. You drop 'em in an ocean, a lake, anything, they'll replace it.

Try that with your high-priced fancy-shmancy sunglasses, and see how far you get. The answer is, not far at all. And the quality of every pair of Shady Rays is guaranteed for life. It's entirely free coverage for the life of these sunglasses. You are going to adore these. They have cool styles.

Also, they have— they provide ten meals to fight hunger in America with every order you place, and they have provided over four million meals to date. You can't beat that, folks. You simply cannot.

Go check out the styles. You can at least do that for me, right? Go to ShadyRays.com and uh, see what all they have to offer.

Plus we can offer you a very good deal here. It's very good. You're gonna go to ShadyRays.com, again, and you'll use the code "Sawbones" and get 50%, that's half, off of two or more pairs. Just like, buy one, get one free. You get two pairs for \$45. This is— I mean, that's a— and these are really good sunglasses. Seriously, go check it out, try it. You won't be disappointed.

It's ShadyRays.com, and use the code "Sawbones." You can find all the new— new shades, and new looks they got, and then that deal, "Sawbones," use that code, and you're gonna get 50% off two or more pairs. I mean, it's— stock up. Summer is here. There's no two ways about it. Um, check it out, ShadyRays.com.

Also, this week, an old favorite, a classic sponsor here on Sawbones, but one that we love just as much as we did the first time that we took the— that old walk around the maple that is sponsored podcasting. It's Blue Apron. Helping you make delicious, sustainable meals at home.

What does "sustainable" mean in this context? Well, it means that uh, you'll try this, and you'll actually want to do it. We've stuck with Blue Apron for years now, because it lets us make really delicious meals very easily, and really healthful meals, too. Stuff that has a lot of uh, good nutrition in it. Take it from me, a food scientist.

Plus, the foods are delicious. I mean, here's some of the recipes they got for June. Seared chicken and creamy lime sauce with salsa verde potato salad. Jalapeno burgers. Ooh, uh, spiced fish and avocado tacos, with roasted sweet potatoes. God, I'm hungry!

[sighs] Anyway, this is really delicious food, and you can make it yourself, and you wanna try it right now. Make these brag-worthy meals at home without the hassle. Go to BlueApron.com/Sawbones, that's BlueApron.com/Sawbones, and uh, get started with Blue Apron, a better way to cook.

And right now, folks, we are headed back to the program, and uh, hope you enjoy it!

Sydnee: Also, it could just be used for aches.

Justin: [laughs] Now, this one works. [laughs] This one, I can— I'm 38 years old. Now, this one, I can attest to.

Sydnee: Or "weakness," whatever that— whatever you wanna take that to mean. Are you feeling achy, are you feeling weak? You get some wine from your doctor.

Uh, specifically, Hippocrates noted that it was very good for a certain type of headache, and that was the headache that you would get after you had been drunk the night before.

[audience laughs]

Justin: My dude. My dude knew how to party.

Sydnee: Hippocrates said, for that specific headache that follows intoxication, wine can actually really help.

Justin: Now, this one uh, I can attest. [laughs]

Sydnee: He prescribed it to help people throw up, if he thought balancing your humors...

Justin: Now, this one... [laughs]

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: Balancing your humors would involve you throwing up. Uh, he would say just...

Justin: I find actually...

Sydnee: ...drink wine until you do.

Justin: ...go with um, Diet Mountain Dew Code Red and vodka for that.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: That's gonna get you there [clicks tongue] a lot quicker. That one, I can attest. [laughs]

Sydnee: He prescribed it for making people pee. So let's say you don't— you're not peeing.

Justin: Well, yeah. Okay. Fine. Okay.

Sydnee: They had very specific rules about a pregnant person and wine. And specifically, if a person becomes pregnant, they should not drink wine... for one to two days.

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: And then they should continue drinking wine.

Justin: [laughs] One to two days for what— when? Which one to two days?

Sydnee: This is— after conception, they said.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: After— so however you figured that out, you have conc— you know. "I've conceived!" [laughs] Don't drink wine for 24 to 48 hours, and then just go for it.

Justin: I like— you know what I like about that? Is the 24 to 48 hours, one to two days. I like party person who's like, "Well, eh, it's been 24 hours. I'm probably fine."

Sydnee: Good enough.

Justin: "I don't want to err on the side of caution and wait one other entire day. This kid's gotta learn to be tough."

Sydnee: [laughs] They also had a very particular prescription for wine drinking in someone who was breastfeeding. They thought that the wine would pass through the breast milk to the baby, and the concern— again, this is— this is nothing to do with, like, alcohol content. This was really about it was a strong substance to put into your body. It had a lot of effects, you know, rearranging your humors. And so all of that, passing through the milk to the baby, could be dangerous, was the fear.

So in the beginning, they would recommend nursing a child, you should drink wine every three days. And then every other day. And by the time that the baby is 40 days old, you can drink wine every day. But as soon as you can, you should bump that up to twice every day.

Justin: Yes. Yes.

Sydnee: Because by then, the baby can handle the wine. [laughs]

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: And it will make them stronger.

Justin: Yes! Yes. Yes.

Sydnee: Uh... [laughs]

Justin: I don't think mortality rates were so bad back then. I think their partiality rates were bad. 'Cause everyone was partying so hard, they're like, "Eh..."

Sydnee: Everybody was drinking a lot of wine.

Justin: Everybody was drinking a lot of wine. And you know what? By the way, it's funny that that breast milk thing did not actually— like, that was still kind of kicking around uh, when we had Charlie. Like, that's that— you know, the worry of like, breastfeeding and drinking...

Sydnee: Oh, yeah, how much will get through, and...

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: They had, like, little strips. You ever seen these? These strips you're supposed to test the breast milk with...

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: ...to see, like, have you drunk too much?

Sydnee: A very small amount of alcohol...

Justin: It's wild.

Sydnee: ...passes through. This is— yeah. So... and they'll still tell you...

Justin: It's fine, folks.

Sydnee: But they do still— they do— no, I'm not saying that. But they do still tell you to drink uh...

Justin: Have some fun. You're a parent. It's tough.

Sydnee: It's funny; they do. They— it switched to beer. That's what I was told, drink dark beer.

Justin: They still help your supply!

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Defo.

Sydnee: They d— it doesn't— I'm not saying you can't.

Justin: Help your supply of party.

Sydnee: I'm just saying...

Justin: Help your party supply. Your good cheer.

Sydnee: It'll relax you. Uh, Hippocrates waffled a lot on what kind of wine was better for different things. 'Cause like I said, they had very specific, like, prescriptions, based on the type of wine and the person and what was wrong with them.

But at one point, he had a patient who had typhus, and he said, "Let him drink hard, dark wine, if it benefits the patient! If not, a hard white wine, mixed with water."

And then he had another patient with typhus, and he said, "Let him drink white wine, mixed with water, if it benefits the patient. And if not, a hard, dark wine." So basically, just like, drink some wine if you have typhus, I think is the... was the practical upshoot.

They very commonly would mix water with wine. I've said that several times, and it actually wasn't uncommon, because the wines that were made were very strong, both in flavor and alcohol content. So diluting your wine was not a wild idea; it wasn't just doctors prescribing it, because undiluted wine, just pure wine, was seen as a lot more powerful. So you had to be careful if you were gonna drink undiluted wine.

Um, Hippocrates in particular thought a very watery wine was the best way to go. [laughs] So I don't know if that was— I don't know, it makes sense.

Justin: It doesn't, actually.

Sydnee: Well, I mean, from a medicinal standpoint. He thought it was very good for fevers, because it wouldn't upset your head, and it would also help you get all the phlegm out of you, and help you cough up all the phlegm.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: So... Uh, you could mix it with other things, other than just water. Uh, honey was very popular. Milk was very popular. [pause] I don't know, milk and wine? I...

Justin: Ugh.

Sydnee: I have never tried that. I can't imagine that tastes good.

Uh, there were a lot of herbal preparations, wine with different herbs, like, steeped in it, sometimes. Um, for different medicinal reasons. One in particular was something called kykeon. And this one was a— you take a black grape, the inside of a pomegranate, you crush it, and you mix it in a dark wine, and then you scrape in some goat's cheese...

Justin: Ugh, you ruined it!

Sydnee: ...and then you sprinkle that with roasted wheat flour, and then mix it up and drink it.

Justin: No!

Sydnee: And that was— that particular prescription was for postpartum diarrhea.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: Very specific. [laughs]

Justin: So embarrassing, because if people see goat cheese, and wine, and pomegranate laying on your counter, they know.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: They know. They know what's up.

Sydnee: That's a very fancy diarrhea cure. [laughs]

Justin: "Oho! I see someone can't stop going to the bathroom. Ohoho!"

Sydnee: Just like with the Egyptians, wine was popular to put on wounds as well, so once again, any kind of wound you sustained, you could just dump wine in it. Um, open fractures, so like when you break a bone and it pokes out through the skin...

Justin: Ugh.

Sydnee: ...dumping wine on that was a very popular treatment. [laughs] Uh, soaking bandages, again, was one thing. You could also flush out pretty much any orifice...

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: ...with wine, and it was thought to help clean it. Uh, so it was not uncommon for a uterus to be flushed with wine...

[audience groans]

Sydnee: ...both for not having a period when you thought you were going to, or having a period when you weren't thought— when you didn't think you were going to. Both could be treated with a wine flush.

Justin: A lot of people wonder— a lot of people ask me, which wine should I choose for this? And what I always tell them is, don't flush your uterus with any wine you wouldn't drink yourself. That's a good rule of thumb. Don't get the cheap stuff, folks.

Sydnee: There uh, there was one specific note made of uh, at one point, somebody was thought to have a lot of— and they were right, had a lot of pus in their lung, and the only way they knew how to get it out was to cut him open and try to drain it out.

They're not that far off; they just, you know, didn't have, like, sterile technique and stuff, so the patient probably didn't make it.

But that aside, at the...

Justin: You just have to— you have no way of knowing. You don't have to throw that in.

Sydnee: I'm just saying. Well, probably. I don't know, maybe. I don't know. Maybe.

Justin: "They probably beefed it. Anyway, moving on."

Sydnee: But they noted that after you do that, [laughs] flushing the lung with wine was a good idea. That is not a good idea.

Uh, my favorite was— we've talked about on the show before the concept of hysteria, which was like a fake diagnosis for like, "That's a woman doing something I don't like. She's hysterical."

And the idea was that your uterus is moving around your body and, you know, making you all wild. And so [laughs] one popular treatment for that was to get some wine and put it in a heated, like, clay jar, and then sit on it.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: It's like a wine fumigation, because the uterus will be attracted to the wine...

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: ...and work its way back down into place.

Justin: [laughs] It does a little cartoon thing and starts wafting on the scent, just floating along.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Like a pie cooling in a window.

Sydnee: Uh, it was also, of course, just a—

Justin: Oh, I— as I have to say every show, [sarcastically] I'm sorry. Just to everybody who's not like me exactly, I'm sorry about that. Sorry.

Sydnee: Well, but the— you could also use it for— everybody with a rectum could use it, you could use it as an enema! And so that was a popular— a wine enema, especially mixed with honey and oil...

[audience groans]

Sydnee: ...was supposed to be [laughs] good for, like, congestion.

Justin: [singing] A bottle of red— [normally] really?

Sydnee: [laughing] Yes.

Uh, there was a poultice made out of wine that was good for wounds. It had wine and watercress and [laughs] flax. Uh, honey and wine was put in the eyes. Any problem with your eyes, they would just mix it...

[audience groans]

Sydnee: ...and drip that in your eyes.

Justin: I don't know which part of that is worse.

Sydnee: Uh, if you're having any sort of anal problem.

Justin: Okay. I'm listening.

Sydnee: Hemorrhoids, itching, burning...

Justin: Everybody shut up.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: What you wanna do...

Justin: Griffin, listen!

Sydnee: [laughs]

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: So what you're gonna wanna do is boil some eggs in a dark wine, and then apply that to your anus. And that'll fix that.

Uh, and then for tetanus, you just wanna soak some leaves in some white wine, and put them on the wound. And then you're good. [laughs]

Um, of course, moving forward to the Romans, you can't talk about wine and not talk about the Romans, they love the stuff. It was a daily beverage. Everybody was drinking wine any time of the day, and it was uh— and it was consumed a lot more generally. Like, at this point, everybody was drinking wine. It wasn't just for royalty. You know, everybody liked wine.

Again, we're still dealing with a lot stronger wine, so like, the concept of watering down wine would not be— would not be strange. A lot of people would do that.

Um, they added lots of new indications for wine. Lots of new reasons you might need to drink it. Uh, any kind of bloating, constipation, diarrhea, gout, [laughs] bad breath... snake bite. [laughs]

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: Tapeworm, dizziness. Anything. [laughs] Drink some wine.

Uh, there was a specific recipe for a laxative where you had to like— and this starte— man. You have to know you need a laxative way in advance for this one, 'cause you've got to grow the grape vines and treat them with ashes and manure and hellebore and then once you've like, made— like, grown the vines and you have the grapes, then you make the wine and then you can drink that wine [laughs] and it's a laxative.

Justin: You're gonna look smart, though. When your neighbors come a-calling, like, "Hey, listen. I meant to do this a few mo— years ago, and I

didn't, but did you maybe uh, grow any vines in hellebore, and the...
[laughs]

Sydnee: Uh, Galen liked to use wine in a lot of— he treated gladiators, and he would basically use wine for anything that happened to the gladiators. And he would tell you that it worked, because he claimed to have never lost a single one that he treated. Everybody survived.

But he would, again, pour wine on any kind of wound they sustained, and even with like... let's say he had to do abdominal sur— you wouldn't have done abdominal surgery. Somebody had a big, gaping abdominal wound that would like, expose their intestines, you would just soak 'em in some wine, and then...

Justin: Bury them.

Sydnee: [laughs] No, just like, stuff 'em back into place. I mean, I'm assuming he did, because he says they all survived. [laughs]

Justin: He didn't say how long.

[audience laughs]

Justin: "Anyway, good luck, bye! Another successful patient."

Sydnee: His— his version of a theriac, which a theriac was like, a cure-all from the time, and it like, there are many, many different theriacs that were made throughout history by different physicians, and there were like, different traditions of theriacs, and it usually was something that contained 50 or 60 different ingredients, and was very complicated, but was thought to be the antidote to everything, the cure for everything.

Um, he had his own theriac that was based on wine. It had, like, 60 total ingredients, but wine was the big one. He also included herbs, opium, and viper flesh.

Justin: Nice.

Sydnee: Uh, and everybody thought it was just great. Marcus Aurelius loved it. [laughs] But he— this theriac that he created, like, would continue to persist throughout history for, I mean, centuries afterward, this recipe for wine-based theriac for anything.

And again, he also believed that wine turned into blood once you drank it, so he said it's probably good for anything that's wrong with, like, veins, arteries...

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: ...the heart.

Justin: All that stuff.

Sydnee: Any blood.

Justin: Blood stuff.

Sydnee: Any blood issues.

Uh, the last figure from ancient history who had a lot to say about wine we gotta mention, is Pliny the Elder.

Justin: Yeah.

[audience cheers]

Sydnee: I couldn't— I could do an entire show alone on what Pliny the Elder said about wine, because he wrote— in his book of natural history, he wrote extensively about the cultivation of wine, and the different regions, and what was good and what was bad, and just some, like, general wine advice. And then also all of the medicinal uses. Like, there's an entire book within the collection that is dedicated to medicinal uses for wine.

Um, he did note that it was good to cure disease, but it also could be used to excess and cause problems. Um, he thought it improved, again, blood,

vigor, your complexion, you looked better, you were more attractive, [laughs] you had more friends if you drink wine.

Um, he said that uh, wine-drinkers tend to be more robust and ready than everybody else.

Justin: Okay. Sure.

Sydnee: It strengthens the sinews. He thought it was great for your stomach. He thought it was very good for any sort of mental illness, so depression or anxiety or insomnia or if you're just going through an extended grieving period.

Justin: You know, it may seem that way, Pliny...

Sydnee: Wine.

Justin: [laughs] It may seem like it, Pliny, but it's not a long-term solution, Pliny.

Sydnee: Uh, he thought it was good for any poisonous fungi. It was good for that. [laughs]

Justin: It does help me be a fun guy. That I can attest to.

[audience cheers]

Sydnee: That was a great dad joke. Uh, and then of course, he not only wanted you to drink it, but you could put it all over your body. If you have a heart problem, just like, rub some on your chest.

Justin: Sure. Topical.

Sydnee: That seems good. Um, bathing the genitals in it was always a good option. Pliny loved to do that stuff. [laughs]

And, and, in addition to— and it could go on and on. I mean, he used it for— he recommended it for everything, but in addition to all that, he also was the one who said "in vino veritas," which I didn't realize.

Justin: Go figure.

Sydnee: So, you know. But it was more of like a warning, like, "Be careful. You get really drunk, and you say things that are true, but you shouldn't say them."

Um, wine continued to be important, like, throughout the ancient world, it was all like, "Wine's great, everybody loves it." After that, especially because of religious influences, wine was still used for some like, digestive purposes, and as a disinfectant, but its use for everything started to wane.

And especially with, like, the temperance movement, you know, wine... there were medicinal wines that were sold during temperance— or during prohibition, so it was like, a sneaky secret way to get wine. Like, "Oh, it's medicinal." But eventually, people stopped buying it.

Uh, this was kind of revived, this idea that wine's really good for you, in the '90s with what was called the French paradox, the idea that French people live a lot longer and they're a lot healthier, and we think it's because they drink a bunch of wine. And this was very popular, and there was a point where, like, doctors were recommending, like, "Hey, you're doing everything right, except start drinking." Um, specifically red wine was thought to be good.

And when I was first trained, I was told the same thing. Like, "The red wine's probably good for people, so if somebody's a teetotaler, you should advise them to start drinking."

We've kind of gone away from that now.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs] And I'm not saying that any amount of wine is bad for you, but I'm not necessarily saying that wine is good for you, either.

Justin: [high pitched] But that seems...

Sydnee: In moderation... for a lot of people, it can be safe. Uh, but the days of us recommending that "Hey, you're healthy, except you should drink more wine," are probably long gone.

Justin: Aw, man. Well...

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: That's a bummer.

Sydnee: And you're drinking white anyway, so...

Justin: Yeah, but I like to live on the edge. You know me, Syd.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Folks, that's gonna do it for us uh, for this week.

[audience cheers]

Justin: I wanna say thank you to you for coming here. Thanks to The Taxpayers for the use of their song Medicines as the intro and outro of our program. Thank you to uh, our dear friend, Paul, who is a...

[audience cheers]

Justin: ...exemplary human being, one of the few people I like, is Paul Sabourin. And uh, you can check his music out at PaulAndStorm.xxx.

And uh, that is gonna do it for us, folks, so until next week, my name is Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: [laughs] I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: [laughs] And as always, don't drill a hole in your head!

[audience cheers]

[theme music plays]

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Speaker 1: I listen to Reading Glasses because Brea and Mallory have great tips.

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Speaker 3: I listen for the author interviews.

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Mallory: If you go in person to an event, and go up to an author or a filmmaker or anybody, and tell them what that you don't like about their work, you're a trash baby.

Brea: Look, I understand you didn't like Heroes season three. That's fine.

Mallory: [laughs]

Brea: Like, I don't actually need to know that information.

I'm Brea Grant.

Mallory: And I'm Mallory O'Meara. We're reading glasses, and we solve all your reading problems every Thursday on Maximum Fun.