

## Shmanners 227: Absinthe

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**Travis:** Hey, I've missed you!

**Teresa:** Well, you know what they say. Absinthe... makes the heart grow fonder.

**Travis:** It's Shmanners!

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

**Teresa:** And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

**Travis:** And you're listening to Shmanners!

**Teresa:** It's extraordinary etiquette...

**Travis:** ... for ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

**Teresa:** Hello, dear.

**Travis:** How are you?

**Teresa:** I'm doing well. How are you?

**Travis:** I'm doing great, y'know? Here we are, 11:00AM on a Friday morning.

**Teresa:** Woo!

**Travis:** And we've got little glasses of absinthe sitting in front of us.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I'm gonna move my microphone so I can look more at my wife. Excuse me for the mic noise.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Now... here's the thing. We're talking about absinthe.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** It's a liquor, I believe. Right?

**Teresa:** It is.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** It is a distilled, high potency, high alcohol spirit.

**Travis:** Now, here's—here's why I like... okay. Here's the pros and cons for Travis McElroy, regarding absinthe. Pros: a lot of to-do around it, which I like. I like a thing that has like a... show to it. That has a process.

**Teresa:** Right. Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Uh, con... uhh... a lot of baggage.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** A lot of baggage to it. Now, here's the thing – people might've expected me to say, the flavor.

**Teresa:** Which is my thing. [laughs]

**Travis:** But I rather enjoy black licorice, which, the anise in uh... in absinthe speaks well to me. Now, what we've got here... we have, uh, two tiny glasses of absinthe sitting in front of us that we have poured.

**Teresa:** We do.

**Travis:** And we have dissolved a little bit of sugar, and a couple of drops of water into it. As I said, part of the to-do. And we're gonna do a little tasting.

**Teresa:** Are we gonna do that now, or later?

**Travis:** Yeah, no! We're gonna do it now. We're gonna talk about it. Uh, right here at the top. Or do you want to save it?

**Teresa:** I've got like, butterflies!

**Travis:** Why do you have butterflies?

**Teresa:** Well, because...

**Travis:** It's not like a challenge. We're not gonna show—no one's watching. We could lie.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Because I reeeally don't like the licorice flavor. I have never tried absinthe, and I don't—

**Travis:** You've never tried absinthe?

**Teresa:** No. And I don't like the smell.

**Travis:** You've been with me for ten years and you've never—I thought I made you try it once! Okay.

**Teresa:** No. I didn't. But alright, alright.

**Travis:** Then let's do a little tasting now. Now that I know that—'cause you need to be able to talk about it, if you've never...

**Teresa:** I mean... I'm comfortable using 'in theory.'

**Travis:** Lying? No. Here we go.

**Teresa:** Okay...

**Travis:** Now, first, deep smell. This isn't gonna help you.

**Teresa:** Blugh.

**Travis:** Yeah, I know. I knew that was coming.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I knew you wouldn't enjoy it, but I want you to be ready for it.

**Teresa:** Okay. There's a lot of sugar at the bottom. I'm gonna—

**Travis:** I gave you extra sugar.

**Teresa:** I'm gonna swirl to try and dissolve some more of the sugar. And we'll talk about the sugar business a little later.

**Travis:** See, I love the smell. Smells like black licorice.

**Teresa:** We don't have one of those pour-over businesses.

**Travis:** Yeah, that's true. It's a whole thing.

**Teresa:** Do you remember that one time you were, uh... teching a show, and we needed sugar cubes, and we couldn't find sugar cubes anywhere? Where'd we finally get 'em?

**Travis:** I went to Party Source here in Cincinnati.

**Teresa:** Party Source!

**Travis:** It's like this huge, uh...

**Teresa:** In Newport.

**Travis:** Uh, party superstore. Yeah. Correct. Well, it's in Cincinnati. It's fine. It's greater Cincinnati area.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Okay, cheers.

**Teresa:** Cheers. Salud. [drinks, then makes a gagging sound]

**Travis:** I know, but—okay, but that was a really delayed reaction. You thought it was gonna be worse than it was.

**Teresa:** I did think it was gonna be worse.

**Travis:** I can read your mind and your face!

**Teresa:** The sugar does help a lot for me.

**Travis:** Well, but—

**Teresa:** But I can actually taste more black licorice as I'm talking, moving the air across my tongue.

**Travis:** Oh yeah. Oh, I love it. Ohh, yeahhh!

**Teresa:** Um, the actual beverage does not really taste much like really anything.

**Travis:** Well, like you said, it's strong alcohol. It's got—so like, you get it on the back end, as they would say, the licorice.

**Teresa:** Yeah. I mean, I can feel the licorice on my tongue, and as I talk, and the heat.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Coming up my throat. So it's really not actually that bad. I think I had played it up, like much of history had played it up.

**Travis:** Well, yeah. Here's a spoiler alert, folks – absinthe? It's just another liquor. Okay. I think it was Mitch Hedberg had the great joke of like, uh, drinking absinthe, and then trying to like, have a trip, and being like, "Why is lemonade not eating me?" Like, he's just trying to like, just psyche himself into having some kind of trip.

**Teresa:** [laughs] So. Let's start it out here.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So, this episode topic was suggested by Kaye M., so thank you, Kaye.

**Travis:** Thank you. And once again, let's just say right here – thank you, Alex, for helping with research.

**Teresa:** Yeah! And email us topics! We love to get those emails.

**Travis:** Looove those topics. [ShmannersCast@gmail.com](mailto:ShmannersCast@gmail.com).

**Teresa:** Um, and a lot of this information—

**Travis:** We'll do a whole episode about Malort. And we'll taste Malort at the beginning, and—

**Teresa:** Blugh!

**Travis:** Meh, okay.

**Teresa:** I have tasted Malort.

**Travis:** Oh yeah. Ugh. Ugh.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** The worst.

**Teresa:** Um, a lot of great information was from the YouTube channels Flaviar, and How To Drink.

**Travis:** Oh, caviar?

**Teresa:** Yeah, that's how it's spelled.

**Travis:** Sure. And How To Drink.

**Teresa:** How To Drink.

**Travis:** Oh, y'know what? Also, let's do a little plug here. Uh, if you like hearing about alcohol...

**Teresa:** Oh, that's right!

**Travis:** Yeah! Some, I would say, uh, sisters-in-law? McElroy sisters-in-law?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Elizabeth Wellman, who is Teresa's sister, and Teylor Smirl, who is Sydnee's sibling. They do a podcast called Neat! The Boozecast, all about

like, mixing cocktails, the history of stuff. You can find them, I think, on YouTube. And y'know, just listen to—find it! Enjoy it! Neat!

**Teresa:** I got mine on my little app on the phone.

**Travis:** There you go. Okay.

**Teresa:** Okay! So. Once again, absinthe is a distilled, high potency, high alcohol spirit that originated in Switzerland during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Travis:** Really! I would've guessed France!

**Teresa:** Well, because... it did make its way to France during the impressionist era...

**Travis:** Well, yeah, right?

**Teresa:** ... where the popularity exploded.

**Travis:** I will say... ugh. I don't know what this says about me. Maybe it says I'm basic. But when I think about absinthe, the first thing that comes to mind is Moulin Rouge.

**Teresa:** Oh yeah. We'll get there. We'll get there.

**Travis:** [sighs]

**Teresa:** Um, okay.

**Travis:** Disappointed in myself. I'm disappointed in myself. Like, I wish that I was classier than that.

**Teresa:** Listen, it's not your fault. It's the marketing. It's the cultural, uh, osmosis that we've gotten.

**Travis:** And let me be clear – I mean the movie. I mean the movie.



**Teresa:** Yes. Totally. Totally. That's the thing. Um, okay. I think of Hemingway.

**Travis:** Sure. Okay, fine.

**Teresa:** As well. As well.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Those bohemians.

**Travis:** But it feels like a flex when I just said I think of the Ewan McGregor movie, and you're like, "I think of Hemingway! [mocking posh laugh] And his polydactyl cats!" That's you! That's how you sound!

**Teresa:** I didn't—I didn't say that.

**Travis:** That's exact—hey, listeners? Let @TeresaMcElroy know that that's how she sounded!

**Teresa:** [laughing] Alright. So, it begins as a neutral spirit, distilled from grapes.

**Travis:** Oh! Like grappa?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Okay. Or, y'know, I guess, wine.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Wine.

**Travis:** Wine would've been a more obvious choice. But if we're talking about like, liquor, I'm pretty sure, like, grappa is grapes.

**Teresa:** I'm pretty sure.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Maybe that's another one.

**Travis:** Okay. And we'll have to talk about ouzo, too. Ouzo is a big one.

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Write that down. Write that down.

**Travis:** It's written down. In my head.

**Teresa:** Uh, so then it goes through a second process, where it is infused with wormwood.

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** That's the one, right? The important one that we'll talk about later.

**Travis:** Yeah, that's the one that would have a star next to it.

**Teresa:** Yes. Uh, star anise, right?

**Travis:** Well, I guess that one would have a star next to it. [laughs]

**Teresa:** Fennel.

**Travis:** 'Cause it's star ani—okay.

**Teresa:** Ehh... fennel. And then, lots of other little things.

**Travis:** Is it an-iss, or an-eeese?

**Teresa:** I think it depends on what side of the pond you're on.

**Travis:** Okay. 'Cause I think there are also some people who say like, an-eye-eeese, and it has like, a lot. 'Cause that's the name of the little bunny in Gumball. Anais. And it's not important.

**Teresa:** Anyway.

**Travis:** Okay. Ohh, it's gone straight to my head!

**Teresa:** [sighs] Alright. So, here's the thing, right? We've talked about how it has a licorice profile.

**Travis:** Yes, very much so.

**Teresa:** But it can actually just taste like... super bitter. Which is why people drink it with sugar.

**Travis:** Ohh, okay. Okay. 'Cause I was wondering why... y'know, the thing is, with a lot of alcohols, right? For example, let's start with bourbon. Or whiskey. Right? You can have whiskey neat. Nothing in it. And then you have whiskey on the rocks, or over ice. You have whiskey with like, a splash of water, right? Scotch, I have heard, uh, been taught, like, you can drink scotch straight, or add a couple drops of water to open up the flavor profile. Right?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** But with absinthe, I've never heard the, "Well, you can, or..." It's like—

**Teresa:** Well, I think that you *can* do anything you want. But...

**Travis:** Sure. Not recommended, right?

**Teresa:** Not recommended. The recommended way of drinking it is with a cube of sugar, and water dropped over it, slow enough to dissolve the sugar into the drink.

**Travis:** But it's like if you got a package of Ritz crackers, and on the back it said, "Do not eat these Ritz crackers unless you put a tiny piece of meat, and a tiny piece of cheese on it!"

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uhh... alright.

**Travis:** But it makes more sense now to know that there are versions of it where it's like, oh, it's just straight bitter. 'Cause this is very, I would say, uh... and maybe it's the sugar we put in it, but flavorful.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Palatable, one might say.

**Teresa:** Um, okay, so... the thing that I remarked from uh, when you poured it in the glass, was it doesn't look very green to me.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Again, that's another thing with the flavor.

**Travis:** We're drinking Lucid brand absinthe, by the way. This is not sponsored, but just... so no one asks.

**Teresa:** Um, that's another thing.

**Travis:** I don't like being questioned.

**Teresa:** That goes with the flavoring, right? Because the more green anise you use, um, the more color green you get.

**Travis:** Okay, so—

**Teresa:** And... we'll see later how that perfect color green search led people to adulterate it.

**Travis:** Okay. Now, you mentioned wormwood. Why did you put such a fine a point on it? Say I'm the only bee in your bonnet.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Um, because... wormwood has been blamed for the, quote, "hallucinogenic" properties.

**Travis:** Well, because wormwood is poison? Right?

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** In high amounts? But so is alcohol, really, so...

**Teresa:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Travis:** Is it "hallucigenic," or "hallucinogenic"?

**Teresa:** I don't know.

**Travis:** And y'know what? Here's the weird thing – nobody knows.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Okay. So um, here's a fun game that Alex posed to us in the copy.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** And I love it when she plays these games. Here is two truths and a lie about absinthe.

**Travis:** Mm, okay.

**Teresa:** Here's the first one. The first one is, "Being banned for 100 years because of a grisly murder."

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** Second one: "Protecting troops from malaria."

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and third, "The hallucinations associated with the drinking."

**Travis:** Well, now, hold on. I'm pretty sure the hallucinations are a lie. So the other two are true?

**Teresa:** Here we go.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um...

**Travis:** Now, let me say real quick, right? When um... when I first—so, I will get on like, like, binges of researching something. And absinthe is one where like, when I went to buy it, right? If I was gonna buy absinthe, I was like, "I wanna buy the, quote, "good" kind."

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** And so I was like, what's the like, actual absinthe? I don't want your grandmother's absinthe! I don't know. Or maybe I did want my grandmother's absinthe. Who knows. And so, I started researching, trying to find like, a time where it had blank ingredient that's not there anymore. And wormwood was the one where it's like, "Well, some have more, and some have..." But like, there were no claims ever made about that.

So, it kind of made me feel like... oh, so, this is all BS. Now you go.

**Teresa:** Okay. Wormwood is an herb native to Eurasia and Northern Africa. Um, but it has also been naturalized in Canada and parts of the United States.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** It looks a little bit like the cross between a mint and a thyme plant.

**Travis:** Okay. I would argue, both mint and thyme? Better branding than *wormwood*. Spelled with a Y, too! [no it's not] Ohh, it's like, weird, and eugh! Wormwood! Mint. Thyme. Wooormwood!

**Teresa:** Alright, alright.

**Travis:** I'm just saying. Could deal with a rebrand.

**Teresa:** It's actually pretty simple to grow in your garden, if you want to. And it actually has a wide array of, quote, "medicinal uses."

**Travis:** As does a lot of poison.

**Teresa:** As does a lot of poison. Uh, it had been used to treat everything from liver and fever... sorry, liver disease and fever, loss of appetite, even... it was used, at one point, to treat depression.

Now, I'm not a doctor, but I'm gonna have to say... being used to treat so many different things probably means it did not help any of them.

**Travis:** As our sister podcast, Sawbones, would say, "Cure-alls cure nothing."

**Teresa:** Right. And it has even been linked to, um, ancient Egyptian medical practices.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** So, here's the—

**Travis:** Uh, just—mm! Just want to say, once again, uh, on behalf of Sawbones... just because something has been used forever, doesn't mean it works. And in fact... [laughs] 99% of the time, is an indicator that perhaps, it does not work. Or else, we'd still be using it now. I can't remember the last time I went to my therapist, and she said, "Ooh, you're sad, huh? Chew on this wormwood."

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. Um, so, this is where it was often used to fend off malaria.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, so, uh, the story goes that the French foreign legion were actually given a daily allotment of absinthe to keep them safe from malaria when they were out in the field.

**Travis:** I like how you just said absinthe. I think you put one too many TH sounds in there.

**Teresa:** Absinthe?

**Travis:** But you said like, abthinthe. I think. It went right to your head! Well, the—star anise can numb your tongue!

**Teresa:** Oh, really?

**Travis:** Yeah! I want to say it was used as an, uh, an oral... what's the word I'm looking for? Y'know, when they give you like, novocaine to numb...

**Teresa:** Analgesic?

**Travis:** Analgesic! Yeah! To like, numb—and I mean, in higher doses than is in absinthe, I'm sure.



**Teresa:** Right. So, the word 'absinthe' actually comes from the Greek word, 'absintheon', which literally translates to 'undrinkable.'

**Travis:** Oh! Oh boy!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Once again – bad branding. [laughs]

**Teresa:** And the wormwood that contributes to this was actually, like, super, uh... super hip, right? Being used to flavor everything from wine and beer, and um, and teas, and like I said, medicines, and things like that.

**Travis:** Okay, but... was it... was it like a challenge thing now, where it's just like, "Oh, you're drinking poison. Cool, dude."

**Teresa:** No. It wasn't. It was just the hip, cool thing to do. Well-off Europeans, people claiming to be enlightened during the Renaissance, things like that. But really, the 17<sup>th</sup> century is where things really start to get interesting.

**Travis:** Okay. Well, y'know what? That seems like a good hook... to take a break... and say some thank you notes to our sponsors!

**Teresa:** Okay.

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** We want to send a thank you note to Quip. When's the last time you got rewarded for brushing your teeth? With Quip's new smart electric toothbrush, good habits can earn you great perks, like free products, gift cards, and more!

I love Quip. I've always loved Quip. I've enjoyed the brushing technology that is gentle on my teeth and gums, but still reminds me to brush for two minutes, and gives me little pulses every 30 seconds to tell me when to move from quadrant to quadrant.

But now, they have something brand new that rewards you! They have a smart brush that's for adults and kids, that connects to the Quip app with Bluetooth to track your brushing and earn rewards from Quip partners. And if you already have a Quip, you can upgrade it with smart motor and keep all the features you know and love.

So, start getting rewards for brushing your teeth today, and go to [GetQuip.com/Shmanners](https://GetQuip.com/Shmanners) right now to get your first refill free. That's your first refill free at [GetQuip.com/Shmanners](https://GetQuip.com/Shmanners). That's [GetQuip.com/Shmanners](https://GetQuip.com/Shmanners). Quip: Better oral health made simple and rewarding.

And y'know what? Let's not just talk about teeth. Let's talk about... armpits! Specifically, I want to talk to you about Native. You work hard to reward yourself with premium products that mirror your lifestyle, so why not get into Native? Native deodorant doesn't just block odor better – it's made better.

Native has ingredients you've heard of, like coconut oil, shea butter, and tapioca starch. It's also vegan and never tested on animals. Switching to an aluminum free deodorant doesn't mean you have to sacrifice on odor protection. Native will keep you smelling and feeling fresh all day long.

With over ten scents, including rotating seasonals, Native has something for everyone. Their most popular classic scents are coconut and vanilla, lavender and rose, cucumber and mint, and citrus and herbal. I personally, I love that cucumber and mint. That's a flavor combination and a smell combination that I deeply enjoy. Teresa loves the coconut and vanilla, and that lavender and rose. They're great. And they make us feel great and smell great! It's wonderful.

It's light, it doesn't feel heavy. Y'know, I highly recommend. So make the switch to Native today by going to [NativeDeo.com/ShmanPod](https://NativeDeo.com/ShmanPod), or use promo code 'ShmanPod' at check out, and get 20% off your first order. That's [NativeDeo.com/ShmanPod](https://NativeDeo.com/ShmanPod), or use promo code 'ShmanPod' at check out for 20% off your first order.

[music plays]

**Raleigh:** I'm Raleigh Smirl.

**Sydnee:** I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Taylor:** And I'm Teylor Smirl.

**Sydnee:** And together, we host a podcast called Still Buffering, where we answer questions like...

**Raleigh:** Why should I not fall asleep first at a slumber party?

**Taylor:** How do I be fleek?

**Sydnee:** Is it okay to break up with someone using emojis?

**Taylor:** And sometimes we talk about butts.

**Raleigh:** Nooo we don't. Nope.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Find out the answers to these important questions, and many more, on Still Buffering, a sisters' guide to teens through the ages.

**Raleigh:** I am a teenager...

**Sydnee:** And I... was... too.

**Taylor:** [simultaneously] And I... was... too. Butts. Butts, butts, butts butts.

**Raleigh:** Nooo. [laughs]

[music plays and fades]

**Travis:** Okay. Now, after almost 20 minutes, you said things were about to get interesting.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I keep going back to this drink, by the way. I like—I don't know that I'm enjoying it. But like... my brain is saying like, "Eh. Eh. It's Friday."

**Teresa:** [laughs] It's only 11:30AM. Okay. Um... a woman named Henrietta Henriod sold a—

**Travis:** Whoa!

**Teresa:** Alright. Sold a traditional recipe—

**Travis:** I'm just saying, it's a great name!

**Teresa:** [sighs] ... sold a recipe to a Frenchman named Major Henri Dubied...

**Travis:** Okay, wait, hold on. Did you think that I reacted that way because her name sounded like hemorrhoid?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** No! Henrietta Henriod! Like, I don't care about the hemorrhoid part. It's the uh... it sounds like almost a superhero name, because it's the hen and the hen. And then she sold it to Henri, which I'm pretty sure is H-E-N-R-I, right?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Hen. Hen hen hen. I'm just saying, the world is a magical place. Okay. Go on.

**Teresa:** And—

**Travis:** Now, you did a quiet laugh there, and that's not fair to me, 'cause then the listeners at home don't know that you laughed. I need audible laugh to show that I was effective, please.

**Teresa:** Um, but I don't like encouraging you that way.

**Travis:** I know, but I saw it! And so now, I feel encouraged, but the people at home are like, "Aw, Travis is so dumb, wehhh."

**Teresa:** I think you commenting on it is enough.

**Travis:** [sighs]

**Teresa:** [clears throat] And this is where... Henri Dubied flipped it from uh, ancient cure to party drink!

**Travis:** Okay. And this is 17<sup>th</sup> century?

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** So 1600s or 1700s? I always get those confused.

**Teresa:** Okay. So the 17<sup>th</sup> century is when apothecaries were making it as a health drink.

**Travis:** Got it.

**Teresa:** Absinthe, alcohol, stuff. The 19<sup>th</sup> century is when Dubied's marketing of the drink caused it to take off across Europe.

**Travis:** Okay. Now this is when we get in the marketing of like, drink it and enjoy the ride! Right?

**Teresa:** Yeah. Um, and it was so popular, especially in Paris, that the city hosted a five o'clock happy hour called 'the green hour.' L'heure verte.

**Travis:** Okay. So is this where we start to get the branding of like, the green fairy, and...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Okay. Once again, thank you Moulin Rouge.

**Teresa:** Uh, because absinthe, the way they make it was the cheapest alcohol available.

**Travis:** Oh! Okay! That is surprising to me.

**Teresa:** It was thought as the working man's drink, and became... y'know, it was the most fashionable, because it was everywhere. And it was also the um, the drink of the proletariat. Right?

**Travis:** So it is the reverse of Miller Highlife, the champagne of beers.

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** Where Miller Highlife, the champagne of beers, originally was their flagship brand that rich, fancy people drank, it was literally the champagne of beers. And they realized like, well, we need to open this market up. Only rich people are buying it. So they started marketing it to uh, the lower classes, at which point, rich people were like, "Well, now we don't want to drink it anymore."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** So it changed and became, uh, considered, uh, a like, lower-class beer. Much like PBR, where it actually did win blue ribbons, and then eventually, they were like, "We need to open up this marketing." But absinthe went the other way.

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** Where it started as this super cheap working class drink, and now we think of it as like, oh, very high-falutin, very fancy.

**Teresa:** And one of the reasons for that is because, at the time, it was very popular with the arts crowd. People like Picasso, Oscar Wilde, Van Gogh... Ernest Hemingway.

**Travis:** Toulouse Lautrec.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Who I believe is in, uh, Moulin Rouge. [laughs]

**Teresa:** Alright. Um, so... One of the reasons why it was so easy to produce was because there was a wine shortage at the time.

**Travis:** Ohh, okay.

**Teresa:** The turn of the century was kicked off with a plant disease that infected French vineyards all over the countryside, making wine more scarce and expensive.

**Travis:** Bummer.

**Teresa:** So then, the absinthe was made from a different distillation process than the wine. And... [laughs] And then, so, when absinthe was easy to get and wine was hard to get... all of the French... went bonkers. Uh, so, they started a smear campaign.

**Travis:** Against...

**Teresa:** Against absinthe.

**Travis:** Okay!

**Teresa:** Because they wanted you to buy wine. But wine was hard to get and expensive.

**Travis:** Right. So a hard sell.

**Teresa:** Hard sell.

**Travis:** Yeah. I would say.

**Teresa:** That is how they linked it to a murder.

**Travis:** Okay! I forgot about the murder!

**Teresa:** You forgot about the murder one. Okay. So in 1905, there was a grisly murder that happened in Switzerland.

**Travis:** Jack the ripper!

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Where a drunk man murdered his wife.

**Travis:** Now, okay. Could've been Jack the ripper. That was never solved. We don't know who Jack the ripper was.

**Teresa:** I suppose...

**Travis:** That could've—Jack the ripper moved to Switzerland, got married, got drunk, married his wife, said "oh no," and depending on when the Jack the murder rip—murders happened, which I don't know, he either said, "Oh no, this is just like those murders I committed," or, "This has inspired me to commit more murders." And then he fled. [pause] Is that what happened?

**Teresa:** No.



**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, bad luck for absinthe, because it was one of the many liquors that this man imbibed.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and so, a media frenzy turned drinking absinthe into, uh, hallucinogenic murder drink.

**Travis:** Ohh!

**Teresa:** Or, the devil's potion. Right?

**Travis:** So this—hold on. This is like, uh, oh... what's the word? What is it? The marijuana scare. Y'know?

**Teresa:** Oh, yeah. Reefer madness.

**Travis:** Reefer madness!

**Teresa:** Yeah, totally.

**Travis:** Where they said like, "Oh, y'know what this was? The problem here was not the rage and like, the fact that this husband acted this way, but it was in fact, the drink!"

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** And it was so successful...

**Travis:** Reefer madness! Another episode we could do.

**Teresa:** ... that Switzerland abolished absinthe consumption.

**Travis:** Get out!

**Teresa:** In 1910, followed by America in 1912, and France in 1915. And it stayed off the shelves for almost 100 years.

**Travis:** Ho boy! But that brings us to like 2015!

**Teresa:** Uh, yeah. Yep, yep, yep.

**Travis:** Ho boy!

**Teresa:** So here's the thing.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** It does not have any hallucinogenic properties.

**Travis:** No.

**Teresa:** But... probably what happened was, these people were suffering from alcohol poisoning.

**Travis:** Okay. There is also a possibility—okay. If I may posit a sub-theory... right? Based off of prohibition, and what we have learned about like, bootleg whiskey and bootleg gin and bootleg everything...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... is that, if you think it has hallucinogenic properties, right? And you're making, uh, hooch absinthe to sell in underground clubs in France...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** You are probably, uh, poisoning it with other things.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** That *would* lead to hallucinogen, that have nothing to do with the actual properties of absinthe, but would make someone go, "Oh, this guy sells really good absinthe." And it has nothing to do with the drink itself.

**Teresa:** Exactly! Exactly! So, turns out that if you're brewing absinthe at home, it's very hard to make that green color.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Uh, so people put things like... copper salts. Or other heavy metals in there. So maybe, if you're drinking homemade bath salts, you do hallucinate. [laughs]

**Travis:** Yes yes yes. Mm-hmm. This happened with whiskey, where they didn't want to wait to let it soak in barrels, so they just put shoe polish in it! Or turpentine!

**Teresa:** Yeah. Also, because it was considered the drink of the common man, it was linked to communism.

**Travis:** Oh.

**Teresa:** So, uh, we don't want people talkin' about that!

**Travis:** It was poison on purpose?

**Teresa:** No. No. But it was the every man's drink, so you... the Bolsheviks, and proletariats, and the uh... y'know, bohemians. It's linked with all of that stuff, so we don't want that here in Amurrica!

**Travis:** Oh, part of why it was outlawed. Got it. Got it got it.

**Teresa:** Right. Right right right right right.

**Travis:** Isn't that funny? That you would say like, "Well, this kind of liquor is cool. But that kind of liquor? No way!" Like, what a fine line you dudes... okay.

**Teresa:** Yeah. So, lucky for us, absinthe experienced a revival in the 1990s... from the Czech Republic!

**Travis:** Oh, I thought you were gonna say Moulin Rouge. Agh! Okay.

**Teresa:** [laughs] No. Well... when was Moulin Rouge?

**Travis:** Uh, let me think. 2001, now that I think about it. Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah. Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah.

**Teresa:** So, absinthe was still illegal in the US when uh... in 2007.

**Travis:** Really?

**Teresa:** That's when it was lifted. So, Switzerland lifted their ban in 2005. Um, US in 2007.

**Travis:** Okay. So, people watched Moulin Rouge, and they were like, "Well, I gotta get me some of this absinthe." And then they had to wait six years.

**Teresa:** Um, it was also heavily featured in The Perfect Drug by Nine Inch Nails. That... no?

**Travis:** Do you know what that is? I don't know what that is.

**Teresa:** It's a music video. Like, the whole thing is green.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Okay. Anyway.

**Travis:** Thank you for thinking I'm cool enough to know that. That means a lot to me.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Alright. Let's talk about how to drink it.

**Travis:** Yes please! With your mouth! [laughs] Solved! Next episode!

**Teresa:** Okay. Uh, so, what I talked about earlier was the whole kind of like... the water, the sugar, the—

**Travis:** The pour-over.

**Teresa:** The pour-over. There's even like, different types of uh, accoutrements. Right?

**Travis:** So what I have seen is a little like, slotted spoon, right? That you put the sugar cube on. And you kind of uh, like, put it so the spoon kind of sits in the middle of the glass top, right?

**Teresa:** Right right right. So that you can... pour water over it.

**Travis:** Correct. Now, I have also seen that the sugar cube is like, soaked in something so you can set it on fire. And then drop it into the absinthe? Is that the same thing?

**Teresa:** Now, you can do that. But if you set it on fire, the alcohol content changes.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So it will probably taste different.

**Travis:** Sure. But it does seem, right, when you're talking about like... bohemian, and like, look at these—setting something on fire seems... and listen, that's not to knock it. I love when drinks are set on fire. It is... it is good spectacle.

**Teresa:** [laughs] So really, one of the ways that you can really enjoy absinthe is with a very special glass. Okay? It looks kind of like a goblet that has had a little, like... that has a little waist on it, making it kind of like an hourglass. I guess it almost looks like a daiquiri glass when you think about it, where it's got kind of a ball shape at the bottom, and then it opens to a conical...

**Travis:** Okay. Kind of like an urn or a spittoon?

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, so, what you would do is... you would fill the bottom part with the absinthe, and then mix whatever water or other like, cocktail business to the top half. So it's actually a measured glass for you.

**Travis:** That is—y'know when you think about it, I can also picture why there was so much, like, process to it. Where if I'm a very artsy person, which I am, I like watching the pro—y'know, we think about so much of this like, mixology revolution that's gone on in like, the last decade here in America. And probably other places, too.

Where it's like, let's watch somebody really go to town mixing a cocktail together. Where it feels like an art, and not just like, pour, pour, hand. Right? But it's like, we're gonna watch this happen, and it's an art form in and of itself, and ah, even the way you mix the drink is beautiful, and I consume it, and it's beautiful, and our lives are beautiful, and we are all beautiful.

**Teresa:** [laughs] That's the thing about it, right? If you go to certain places, certain bars in France, they'll even have set up this kind of like, dropper. Like it's a big... [laughs] It almost reminds me of like, uh... like a coffee or a tea.

**Travis:** Like a carafe? One of those?

**Teresa:** Yeah, like a carafe like that, where you open up the stopper, and it drips one drop at a time, and you sit, and you enjoy, and you talk, and you feel very artsy while you do it.

**Travis:** Much like a [??] I imagine, right? Like, that idea of like, we sit around, we sip our tiny drinks... but sometimes, they are booze. Sometimes they are coffee. Sometimes they are pain!

**Teresa:** So I think we all learned something today. There's no need to fear the green fairy.

**Travis:** No. And y'know, I think it is the kind of thing where, probably the same as a lot of liquors, where the flavor is more extreme. Right? When you think about, I would say probably vodka is like, the lowest, as far as like, do you care for the flavor or not. And then probably gin, and then whiskey, and then like, tequila, and there's probably other ones in there.

And then, when you get into liquors, you're probably getting into a lot more like, specialized like, "I don't like that!" And like, "That's totally cool."

**Teresa:** Yeah. The botanical additions are, y'know, quite subjective.

**Travis:** It makes it—and I think, much like gin, right? Where I imagine that there are different brands of absinthe that one might care for more than another. Um, and if you are someone who enjoys absinthe, I think we will go back to the uh, lager episode, which we recently recorded, where we will say, if you... if someone at your table orders absinthe, and that's what they want to drink, maybe don't give them a hard time about it. There's no hallucinogenic properties to it at all. Grow up. [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs] Be kind.

**Travis:** Be kind. That's what I meant to say. Be kind. And that's gonna do it for us.

So, let's see... we want to thank Alex again, like we said. Alex, thank you so much for researching the episode.

**Teresa:** Watching so much YouTube. Really appreciate it, because I didn't have time for that this week. The baby is teething.

**Travis:** Thank you Max Fun, our podcast home. You can go to MaximumFun.org to check out all the shows there. You can go to McElroy.family to check out other McElroy projects, including McElroyMerch.com, where you can check out McElroy merch.

Me and my brothers wrote a book about how to podcast. It is a step by step practical guide, but it's also like, funny! We're funny in it! It's a fun—it's like, a fun thing to read! And you can preorder that at McElroyPodcastBook.com. It comes out in January. But what are you waiting for? Preorder it now.

Uh, let's see. What else, Teresa?

**Teresa:** We always thank Brent "Brental Floss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available where those... which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. That is @ShmannersCast. That's where we get our questions when we ask for listener submitted questions for the end of our episodes.

Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography. They did our cover picture for our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners, where you can give and get excellent advice. Also, submit some more topics to us! [ShmannersCast@gmail.com](mailto:ShmannersCast@gmail.com).

Uh... I think that's gonna be it.

**Travis:** Yep. That's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

**Teresa:** No RSVP required.

**Travis:** You've been listening to Shmanners.



**Teresa:** Manners, Shmanners. Get it.

[theme music plays]

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