

## Sawbones 468: Mamajuana

Published August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023  
[Listen here on mcelroy.family](#)

**Clint:** *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.

**Sydnee:** And I'm Sydnee McElroy. Justin, I just wanna thank you, in front of our entire audience, for getting my car inspected and cleaned today.

**Justin:** You're welcome, sweetheart.

**Sydnee:** I really appreciate it.

**Justin:** It's the least I can do. I will admit that I have an affinity for waiting in rooms.

**Sydnee:** Really?

**Justin:** While something is happening. To like my car or whatever. I like when someone's like "Just sit here for a while." You know what I mean?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Justin:** And it will be done eventually, but I like that. There's like nothing you can do, and they have your car so you can't leave.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** So it's pretty chill. I like that. I don't mind it.

**Sydnee:** Well I appreciated it. I got to have lunch with a friend.

**Justin:** Aww! Lunch with a friend!

**Sydnee:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Justin:** What could be more delightful!

**Sydnee:** I know, so.

**Justin:** What a treat.

**Sydnee:** I just wanted to thank you publicly for that.

**Justin:** My pleasure.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Do you know what we're talking about this week?

**Justin:** I do Sydnee, but only because you shared the notes with me.

**Sydnee:** Oh, okay. We tried something new recently.

**Justin:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** A beverage.

**Justin:** Oh. Okay, sorry, I thought you were talking about our co-partnership. Our cross-branded—

**Sydnee:** Oh, well I mean—

**Justin:** Promotional episode, which is also new.

**Sydnee:** So this— in this episode, we're gonna be talking about an alcoholic beverage.

**Justin:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** Mamajuana.

**Justin:** Mamajuana.

**Sydnee:** Mamajuana. And because it is also a medicinal beverage.

**Justin:** Oh.

**Sydnee:** But because it is also, as I have stated previously, an alcoholic beverage.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** This is sort of a crossover of sorts with *Neat! The Boozecast*, which is hosted by my brother Teylor and my dad Tommy. Or my dad Dad, as I call him.

**Justin:** [chuckles] Yes. You pre— He prefers that, yes.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. And they are going to go over like the— what they usually do. They talk about the history of the drink itself and like drinks you can make with the drink, and like what it tastes like, and what it's for.

**Justin:** It's fascinating.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Justin:** If you've never listened, you're in for a treat.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, it's a really great show.

**Justin:** It's the Saw— It's the *Sawbones* of booze!

**Sydnee:** Exactly. And this was a perfect thing for us to sort of both cover because it's booze, and obviously it has a long history because people like to drink it, but it also was a medicine.

**Justin:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** Or is a medicine, or is thought of as a medicine.

**Justin:** [singing] Or was, he is. [normal] Yeah, you know, at— medicine, asterisk.

**Sydnee:** So—

**Justin:** And that's a hard word to say.

**Sydnee:** We're gonna focus largely on the medicinal. The supposed, medicinal, alleged— Alleged, there we go. Alleged medicinal properties. And how we came to think of it as a medicinal beverage. It is known as— Depending on what website you look at, [chuckles] the official drink of the Dominican Republic.

**Justin:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** Now I found that confusing. Because we were in the Dominican Republic not too awfully long ago, and I thought there was a different official drink that I accidentally ordered and then was informed I had ordered the official drink.

**Justin:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** The Santo Libre.

**Justin:** Yes.

**Sydnee:** Which I was told by the bartender like...

**Justin:** Yes. It's kinda like a Cuba Libre, which is rum and coke.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Justin:** This is rum and sprite.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Justin:** Yes.

**Sydnee:** Yes. That's what it was.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** And it was very good.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I had several. [chuckles]

**Justin:** [wheezes] Some— Some number. Of more than—

**Sydnee:** I had some number. And I felt—

**Justin:** More than one.

**Sydnee:** I felt very like... good when I ordered it, 'cause I was like...

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I thought it was the nati— I thought this was like the national drink.

**Justin:** Yes.

**Sydnee:** But then like— then everything I'm reading about mamajuana is like "No no no, this is the national drink."

**Justin:** Well maybe that's the national cocktail.

**Sydnee:** Ohhh.

**Justin:** Yeah, possibly.

**Sydnee:** Mmm...

**Justin:** You know, since this is a spirit.

**Sydnee:** Maybe this is like the national pour.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Or maybe the D.R. is just cool enough to have two.

**Justin:** Yeah, who knows.

**Sydnee:** You know, maybe it's just— it's just that simple. Either way, and maybe Teylor and Dad can sort that part out.

**Justin:** Here's hoping.

**Sydnee:** There you go. So we tried mamajuana. When we were in that Dominican Republic.

**Justin:** Yes.

**Sydnee:** And we brought— So you can bring back, to give you an idea, and I'm gonna talk about what it's made of and that kind of stuff. But like when you— if you wanna transport it, one option is like— I like to think of it as like a DIY booze kit.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** That you can purchase. Don't you think that's a fair—

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** You know what I'm talking about.

**Justin:** Bo— Booze—

**Sydnee:** The way that we transported it.

**Justin:** Yeah, booze fixings.

**Sydnee:** Booze fixings?

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** It's a— The bottle is full of all of the... basically like the herbal ingredients in it. And I mean it looks like a bottle full of wood chips. There are— there's a lot of wood chips.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** There are other herbal ingredients. There are other dried spices and herbs in there. But basically you take home this bottle of the dry ingredients, and then you rehydrate them with alcohol.

**Justin:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** And then you can— so it's like your own little DIY mamajuana kit. The history— And I thought this was interesting. I started reading about the history of mamajuana, and then I found somebody else saying "Well, that's probably not the history. That was probably like retrofitted on the drink."

**Justin:** Mmm, right.

**Sydnee:** "When it was popular in the 1950s." 'Cause that's like really where the story of the modern drink comes from. But then there's this sort of... And I don't know, like how do you— It's so hard sometimes to tease out, because the— especially when we're talking about— I mean this is something like a beverage, which I mean.

**Justin:** It's not life and death.

**Sydnee:** Right?

**Justin:** It's not that. Y— Right.

**Sydnee:** Like you can create this sort of like mythical story behind it.

**Justin:** Sure.

**Sydnee:** And especially if it's meaningful to a certain community, culture, country, or something like to o— to people like connect with it. Like this is part of our sort of national identity is like this is our thing. Kinda like West Virginians and pepperoni rolls.

**Justin:** Of course.

**Sydnee:** Like there— We know where pepperonis come from, but there is also— it is also a food steeped in mythology.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** Because it's meaningful to us.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I don't know which of these two stories is absolutely accurate. Or if like... the people who made it popular in the 1950s created this backstory for it. What a lot of the information around mamajuana will say is that this actually dates back a very long time ago, to the original inhabitants of the island of Hispaniola. Which obviously would eventually become Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The Taíno people, who were the original inhabitants, created an herbal tea. And so it was a concoction made of the same dry ingredients basically.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** The herbal things that go into mamajuana now, but it wasn't alcohol. It was a tea.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** You would steep it in water and drink it.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Like a lot of herbal teas. And so it has this root as— possibly as an herbal tea.

**Justin:** Root.

**Sydnee:** You get it?

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** This root is a root. Then it is natural that it would have this sort of like medicinal quality kind of tied to it.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** Because, you know, it probably initially was thought to be a healthy beverage. Exactly— I have not been able to find an account of like if we really believe this story, that the Taíno people made the herbal tea that eventually would have alcohol added to it, become mamajuana, what did— what did they use it for?

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.



**Sydnee:** And I'm not sure. It seems like it had this sort of vague identity as this sort of general healthy drink.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** You know?

**Justin:** Something to replenish your vim and vigor.

**Sydnee:** Right. Like there are things that we drink or eat and we're like, "That's healthy." And like what does it do for you? I don't know.

**Justin:** Just like go for it, yeah. You know what I mean.

**Sydnee:** It's healthy.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** It's kind— And like that might or might not be true, right? Like we all think drinking water is healthy.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** And it— water is healthy. It's good for you. You have to drink water, right? If you don't drink any water, you're gonna get sick.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** So you gotta drink wat—so like, that's true. But we also all tend to think granola is healthy.

**Justin:** Right.

**Sydnee:** And... I don't know that that's neces—I mean, what's in the granola?

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** You gotta give me more information.

**Justin:** Is it full of medicine that you need? Because if it's like oats and raisins and... like a—

**Sydnee:** Does it have a lot of sugar?

**Justin:** Antibiotics.

**Sydnee:** `Cause the thing is, if it has a lot of sugar it's gonna be delicious and I'm gonna wanna eat it.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Do I also— [chuckles] I mean like I don't know. There's a lo— Granola encompasses a lot of things. So an herbal tea that was made of a lot of different substances. It was probably more of just like a wellness, like drink this daily, it will maintain your, like you said, vigor.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Kinda like a tonic.

**Justin:** Tonic, yeah.

**Sydnee:** General tonic, kinda thing. Sometime in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as rum was invented and making its way around the world. Rum was probably added to a lot of things, right?

**Justin:** Sure. Why not?

**Sydnee:** Why not? Like you've got it. You have—

**Justin:** [wheezes] You have some there.

**Sydnee:** You have something that didn't have rum in it before.

**Justin:** Maybe it could have rum.

**Sydnee:** It could have rum in it now.

**Justin:** Think about it.

**Sydnee:** And so it ended up in mamajuana. Initially that was sort of like the alcoholic version, we think, was just the rum with all the herbal ingredients.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** Eventually it would evolve and like it's final... sort of iteration would have rum and red wine and honey, as well as the herbal base to the— to the liquid. And throughout these sort of like changes in the recipe... it maintained the idea that it had medicinal benefits. Like that didn't go away.

**Justin:** Now are you going to detail for me the— some of these herbal components that are in there?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Justin:** Because I feel like you're kinda holding those cards close to your chest for the moment.

**Sydnee:** Do you want me to go ahead and tell you them?

**Justin:** No—it's up to you.

**Sydnee:** I could tell you right now.

**Justin:** You're—hey, listen. You're the— you're weaving this tale. You're the tale-spinner.

**Sydnee:** I know, but I try to— I try to take cues from you... as...

**Justin:** I would like to know. I think—

**Sydnee:** As a vessel for our audience.

**Justin:** I think it's distrac—yes, I encompass all of them.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. That's right.

**Justin:** I am legion, and we would like [chuckles] to know.

**Sydnee:** So let me give you some ingredients. Um... A lot of these are herbal things that you may or may not have heard of. One that you probably have is star anise.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** You know what that is.

**Justin:** That's like a... I mean it looks like a star, it's a little, I don't know, seed?

**Sydnee:** Like a pod.

**Justin:** Seed pod, I think?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Justin:** But it's— It imparts that sort of like licorice flavor.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Justin:** It's used in a lot of baked goods.

**Sydnee:** Another one you probably know are clove. You've probably heard of that. There's a kind of basil in it, one's pieces of basil. There's a... an agave leaf in it. Species. There's something called princess vine. And then there are some other things that I wasn't as familiar with. A lot of these things would've been— would be native plants to the area too.

**Justin:** We also have to assume this is not like a fully hard and fast, locked-in recipe. I mean.

**Sydnee:** No. That— And this is really important. So a lot these ingredients that I'm naming... varied depending on where it was made. Because we're— as we're getting into like the production of mamajuana, the beverage. So like there was the herbal tea, people started adding alcohol to it... and then it became its own thing, and people started making that. Everyone had their own recipe for that.

**Justin:** And they didn't even— they enjoyed the rum version so much, that they were like— they did like... They should've done with Wildberry

Fruit Loops, where Wildberry Fruit Loops are so superior to regular Fruit Loops.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Justin:** I made a push that they should just call that Fruit Loops. And then call original Fruit Loops "Worse Fruit Loops." So this seems like that, where like we're not even gonna mess with the tea anymore. This is now mamajuana. We're wild about this stuff.

**Sydnee:** This is mamajuana.

**Justin:** The rum. We're crazy for it.

**Sydnee:** Well, and I mean it sort of did take over. Like I didn't find a separate name. I kept searching for that. What was the name of the tea, prior to it being the beverage mamajuana?

**Justin:** Right.

**Sydnee:** I can't find a specific name for the tea, which adds a little credence to the idea that maybe this backstory was retrofit onto this.

**Justin:** Mmm... Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** Bottle of stuff. Like maybe like the people who sold it later were like "Yeeeeeah, it dates back to a long time ago..." I mean, you know?

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But I mean maybe it did! I don't know. I can't tell you for sure. But the— Also I should say like you can add stuff to it, and this has been some of the— Cinnamon has been commonly added to it. That's not necessarily part of the original recipe. [chuckles]

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** That's the extra crispy.

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** But like other things like raisins get thrown in there. Strawberry, molasses. And then like I said, there's some other herbal ingredients that, I don't know, you probably wouldn't necessarily have heard of, but would have been known to or thought to have various medicinal properties. A lot of these were thought to have been antioxidant, anti-inflammatory that kind of thing.

**Justin:** A pot— A potpourri.

**Sydnee:** A pot—

**Justin:** A potpourri.

**Sydnee:** It really— it looks like a potpourri.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Like if you look at the bottle— Like the bottle—

**Justin:** I mean—

**Sydnee:** — of stuff.

**Justin:** It's a big pile of stuff that smells, that's potpourri, right?

**Sydnee:** Right. It looks—

**Justin:** I mean, it is potpourri.

**Sydnee:** That's what it looks like. When you give the gift to someone, which is what we did, we brought it home as a gift for Teylor, it looked like a bot— like we got you a liquor bottle full of potpourri.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** And then you kind of have to explain why it's not just that.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** Because then— Like if someone thinks it's potpourri, they're probably not gonna add alcohol and drink it.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Maybe. But probably not.

**Justin:** They might also think you're not the best gift giver.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** Because why did you bring this?

**Sydnee:** "I got you a liquor bottle! It's full—"

**Justin & Sydnee:** [simultaneously] "— of potpourri."

**Sydnee:** "Merry Christmas!"

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** "It's February." [chuckles]

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** "We really messed that one up." So, okay. So that's kind of an idea of the different herbal stuff that's in it, and then like I said, it became the beverage mamajuana when rum, it can be white or dark rum.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** Either way works. Red wine and honey are added to it. And that's because a lot of those herbal components have a very bitter flavor.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** And so you've got a lot of sweet stuff that you're tossing in there to sort of offset some of the bitterness of the herbal background. Does that make sense?

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** And then people through spicy stuff in there I think 'cause it tastes nice. So people thought that it had these medicinal benefits, and a lot of people like to consume it. I would say that the alcohol probably made people like to consume it even more. And it started to be used as, like I said, like a general tonic. It was thought to be good for de— for digestion.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** That was a common usage. It was thought to be good for like cold and flus. To combat congestion and that kind of thing.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** And then like the sort of stuff that's like vague, that like a lot of health tonics are like they detoxify your liver.

**Justin:** Right.

**Sydnee:** And kidneys, and—

**Justin:** Right.

**Sydnee:** You know, stuff like that, but—

**Justin:** Energy.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. It gives you energy. So non-specific wellness claims, I would say.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** So it was pretty popular. But not— I would say we have still not even approached even close to like national drink status at this point. A common thing that different families made in different ways at home, that was about it. What really changed it, I think this is like a lot of things in life, is when people couldn't get a hold of it so easily.

**Justin:** [intrigued] Oh...



**Sydnee:** When all of a sudden there were restrictions placed on the sale of mamajuana is really when we start to see it take off as something that's really desirable, and it starts to have other medicinal properties attributed to it.

**Justin:** Oh, like what?

**Sydnee:** Well I'm gonna tell you, Justin. But first we gotta go to the Billing Department.

**Justin:** One of these days, I'm gonna see one comin'. Let's go!

[ad break]

**Sydnee:** So it's important to know that in the background of this next like chapter... the Dominican Republic had come under rule of a new dictatorial leader, Rafael Trujillo was in charge, and there was a lot of restrictions placed on like what people could do and where they could go, and it was a much— this was not the only restriction. The idea that alcohol sales were going to suddenly be restricted. This was just the tip of the iceberg, there's a whole other— which is— I mean listen to historians about the history of the Dominican Republic. Don't listen to me.

**Justin:** There's probably a history podcast.

**Sydnee:** I am not gonna get into that. This is outside of my area of expertise. But you need to know this, because similar to when prohibition happened in the United States and alcohol was banned, but then you see this rise of... medicines that conveniently contain large amounts of alcohol. Or you see the rise of something like bitters. Which bitters were originally a medicinal beverage.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** Which I— You know, we're so sorry it has to have so much alcohol in it, but it's the only way [chuckles] the medicine works.

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** And that's only out of necessity, not because we're trying to slip booze into things, 'cause we all desperately want our booze back.  
[chuckles]

**Justin:** Right.

**Sydnee:** And the Government banned it, and we're all miserable. So similarly, at this— in this time period, you see that mamajuana goes from being this sort of like folk medicine that different people make in their own way, to something very codified by a man named Jesus Rodriguez, who, in the 1950s, started really marketing mamajuana as a distinct beverage. As an entity. And it was an herbal medicine... that contained a lot of alcohol. And again, all of those properties that people—

**Justin:** That sounded like you were giving like asterisks there.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** Like footnote, like "It's a medicine!," and then you look down the bottom in like the fine print, it's like [whispers] "Contains a lot of alcohol."

**Sydnee:** Well, I mean there were a lot of— And again, I would liken this to Prohibition Era, U.S.

**Justin:** Sure.

**Sydnee:** There were lots of things—

**Justin:** Lots of that.

**Sydnee:** — that people did that with. And if you think about it, this persists, right? Like Nyquil still exists. Right?

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] And like it's a medicine.

**Justin:** They're—

**Sydnee:** [whispers] It has a lot of alcohol.

**Justin:** There's more, Zzzquil these days.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Justin:** They're just saying like "Yeah, this is not. Yeah."

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Justin:** "Just drink it." [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** I mean, so like and we— [chuckles] There's so much moralizing around alcohol that we do weird things when alcohol's in stuff. That's just— that's part of the history in this, so medicine and alcohol gets tied up together a lot, I think, for this reason.

So anyway, he started marketing this herbal medicine that could, again, it could treat your flu, help your digestion, your circulation, clean out your blood, your liver, your kidneys. It was a cure-all. It was absolutely pitched as a cure-all.

And all of that came from the herbal component. Like it was very clear, like "We're not saying alcohol fixes you. We're saying that it's all this other stuff that it's in that fixes you," but it was... it was very common to use alcohol as a solvent for different substances. So like that wasn't wild to say...

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** "Yeah, I know this bottle's really full of a lot of booze, but it's just because that's the best way to... You know... Extract all of the medicinal properties from these herbs and barks and whatnot." Okay?

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** And he also added a new angle, which was in addition to all the stuff that you already knew, 'cause everybody was familiar, there was a cultural understanding of mamajuana. In addition to that... it's also an aphrodisiac.

**Justin:** Ohhh...

**Sydnee:** And this was kind of a new sales pitch that had not really necessarily— Other than tonics always were associated with sort of vigor, the idea that it specifically was helpful in the bedroom...

**Justin:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** Had not really been put forward until then. And so he started telling people like “Not only are you gonna get all of these benefits, but... Uh, I use... something special in there.” [chuckles]

**Justin:** And uh...

**Sydnee:** “And that would be turtle meat.”

**Justin:** Oh my. I did not expect you to say that.

**Sydnee:** Yes. That that was the ingredient that would make it an aphrodisiac.

**Justin:** Turtle meat.

**Sydnee:** Yes. Turtle meat.

**Justin:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** Now later, and you’ll find this mentioned in—

**Justin:** Hey, that— Okay, if—

**Sydnee:** — some articles. Some people would rumor it to specifically be sea turtle penis.

**Justin:** Mm... Ah...

**Sydnee:** And that that is why specific— Why would it be— Why would turtles be tied to aphrodisiac? Well it’s because it’s the penis.

**Justin:** It’s a penis of the turtle.

**Sydnee:** But I didn’t— It really depends on what you read as to like did he market it with the penis, or did he market it with just turtle meat? Or

did he even say that, or was that a rumor that developed, and then he probably like ran with it, 'cause it was good for marketing? You know what I mean?

**Justin:** That's a—

**Sydnee:** All this stuff sort of evolves organically.

**Justin:** That makes Shredder make so much more sense.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** The why he was after those turtles so bad, those poor guys.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** He just wants their penises for his—

**Sydnee:** He just—

**Justin:** His thing.

**Sydnee:** I read— Somebody was writing like “Why would a penis turt— Why would a turtle penis be associated with— why would it be an aphrodisiac?” Specifically why like a turtle.

**Justin:** Why a turtle?

**Sydnee:** I understand like genitalia, but like why a turtle? And I guess sea turtle penises are very long.

**Justin:** I can neither confirm nor deny.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** The relative length of sea turtle penis.

**Sydnee:** I read on one article that they're like 12 inches long. So.

**Justin:** I mean honey, that's a number that I don't know how to react to, necessarily.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** That seems like a fine length for a sea turtle's penis. I um...

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** I don't know why— You know what? Honestly, Syd? All due respect. If I had seen 12 inches long in one article, I think I would've searched out another few articles.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** Just to see where everybody else is at on that. [chuckles] I'm not sure I'm comfortable single sourcing the length of sea turtle penis, personally, but okay.

**Sydnee:** I know, maybe I need to read— Should I Google sea turtle penis, or?

**Justin:** Let's not. Let's not. I didn't—

**Sydnee:** See...

**Justin:** I can't have you on a bunch of Government lists.

**Sydnee:** This show puts me in a lot of uncomfortable Googling positions. I have ruined my TikTok algorithm with wellness crap. [chuckles]

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** And I Google things that then put me on lists. [chuckles]

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I still get adds for cold plunge tubs.

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Like every day on Facebook because of all the stuff I lovingly research for you, our listeners.

**Justin:** You, our beloved. Yeah.

**Sydnee:** So anyway. So the— Supposedly it had some sort of turtle... in it. [chuckles] Some kind of—

**Justin:** Turtles all the way down.

**Sydnee:** Some turtle substance in the— [laughs] I don't think that's what that's about.

**Justin:** I do not think that's what that's about.

**Sydnee:** I'm pretty sure that's not what that's about. And he— And there were stories, like a lot of these sort of medicinal things. Like there was a whole story about how he would travel to certain provinces in the D.R., specifically to get the very specific stems that you have to get to make this very, you know, sort of boutique, traditional medicinal drink. And then this aphrodisiac property, and—

Anyway, this made it much more popular than it was before. It grew from like— It was kinda like you know how here in Appalachia, a lot of people have been making moonshine for a long time. And like the concept of moonshine was popular.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** It would be like if you know how they make those like brand name moonshines?

**Justin:** Sure, yeah. They're all over the place now.

**Sydnee:** They're all over the place, and I don't know, maybe somebody out there buys them. Listen, nobody around here buys 'em. 'Cause we don't need to.

**Justin:** Sorta make our own.

**Sydnee:** We make our own. That's just between you and me. But I'm— But imagine if one of those really took off. And like all of a sudden instead

of it being this like cultural idea of like moonshine that everybody has their own.

**Justin:** It's pe— It's all of a sudden Pepsi Moonshine.

**Sydnee:** Yes. Okay. This is kinda what happened. So this mamajuana became like a biiiig deal. And everybody wanted it. And then of course people continued to make their own knockoffs, but now they were based on this new version of it, aaaaand it would make you horny, was the thought. [chuckles]

**Justin:** [snorts] Does it make you horny, baby? Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I mean, you drank some, Justin. So you tell me.

**Justin:** It just seemed like regular.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] Now because everybody—

**Justin:** I'm not on trial here. I refuse.

**Sydnee:** It just sounds like regular. Because everybody started drinking it and then making their own versions of it because, you know, it could help you in that department and that made it very popular... It also... Became restricted pretty quickly. That— The sale of it became something that could only be done by a doctor. So basically you had to either get it from a doctor or have a prescription for it from a doctor, and then [chuckles] take your prescription for mamajuana to a dispensary?

**Justin:** Somewhere, yeah.

**Sydnee:** I mean like really we're talking about a marijuana kinda situation here in the U.S. right now.

**Justin:** No, mamajuana.

**Sydnee:** The— Mamajuana situation. You take your prescription to someone who produced mamajuana, and then you would purchase some prescription strength...

**Justin:** [laughs]



**Sydnee:** Beverage, and then you know, you could have it. It— It was still popular. I mean even with— Like you can imagine how hard it made it.

**Justin:** [snorts]

**Sydnee:** To get.

**Justin:** Oh! Okay, yeah.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** Alright, that makes more sense. I was confused for a second, and now I'm right back with yah.

**Sydnee:** No, not that. Not that. It made it very difficult.

**Justin:** Ahhhh.

**Sydnee:** To obtain.

**Justin:** Okay. Yeah, that makes more sense.

**Sydnee:** Uh-huh. Because you had to get it from somebody with a medical license, and I imagine— I tried to put myself in the shoes of like...

**Justin:** The doctor.

**Sydnee:** The doctor.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Because it's not hard.

**Justin:** [snorts]

**Sydnee:** It's not a hard stretch, because—

**Justin:** [through laughter] You have to stop.

**Sydnee:** Oh my gosh. It's not difficult. [chuckles]

**Justin:** That's the prob— "I know, Doctor! That's why I'm here."

**Sydnee:** [giggles]

**Justin:** "It's not hard, okay?! Just give me the turtle penis booze. Please."

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Justin:** "Stop holding out."

**Sydnee:** It must have been similar to the way I feel now that our state, West Virginia, has legalized medicinal marijuana but not recreational marijuana. And so the only way you can get it is through a doctor.

Now I am not one of the doctors— Let me say this very clear before I have a line outside of Harmony House next week. I am not a doctor who is licensed to prescribe marijuana, so I am not someone who can do it. But in part that's because I just think it should be legalized.

And so when someone sits down in front of me and says like "Can I have a prescription for this?," it's hard— Like I don't know what criteria for me to use because a lot of the data isn't really great one way or the other. But I also just think you should be able to get it if you want it.

**Justin:** Fair.

**Sydnee:** I don't think we should have these legal restrictions on it anyway.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** And so it puts me in a really weird position as a physician to be like the gatekeeper for something... that I don't feel should be gatekept.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** And so I don't— It's hard for me to cope with. I imagine that a lot of the doctors at the time felt the same way. Like they probably... liked mamajuana too. And they probably thought everybody should be able to get it if you want it. And I'm sure you couldn't do that, so who should get

a prescription for marijuana and who do you have to turn away? And what on earth criteria...

**Justin:** Do you— yeah.

**Sydnee:** Do you use to make that decision? [sighs] But when things are restricted, that usually does nothing to stop people from making them, buying them, using them. And wanting them more, in many cases. Which is what happened. It became this kind of— It sort of became bigger than itself.

**Justin:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** I think probably through its restriction, like “Well it must be very powerful if the Government doesn’t want us to have it.”

**Justin:** It’s too— Yeah, right. This is— What are they hiding?

**Sydnee:** What are they hiding? And so it— it also, through this period, it began to be known as the baby maker.

**Justin:** Ah.

**Sydnee:** You could also ask for that.

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Could have a shot of “The Baby Maker.” Or “El Para Palo,” which means “lift the stick.”

**Justin:** [snorts and chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Nowadays, I saw many articles refer to it as “Liquid Viagra.”

**Justin:** [quietly] Oh.

**Sydnee:** So if that’s not clear enough. I don’t know if I’ve made it—

**Justin:** Now it is 100% clear.

**Sydnee:** — very clear. What this is supposed to do for you.

**Justin:** Got it.

**Sydnee:** That is what it's supposed to do. So obviously it was not— it was not illegal for very long, and then it was legalized again and people sell it, and we were able to buy some to drink there, and then also buy a bottle of the herbal ingredients.

And this is pretty common, like you can get it that way a lot of places, where you buy just the bottle of the woode— The barks and the herbs and the dried things, and then add your own rum, wine, and honey. And then I guess at that point you could add raisins or strawberries or...

**Justin:** Whatever you want.

**Sydnee:** You know, citrus juices. Whatever other people like to add to them would be fine. I... I think it's interesting like— And people still do, by the way, make a lot of this outside of the ones that are sold. You can buy it in the D.R., I also found several places throughout the U.S. where you can purchase it.

**Justin:** Hm.

**Sydnee:** Not here in West Virginia, I couldn't find anywhere where you could buy it. I know. Our liquor stores are pretty good.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But they don't have this. And there are obviously ones you can buy that come pre-mixed.

**Justin:** Sure.

**Sydnee:** Where you don't have to DIY it. Like it's not just the hard ingredients. [chuckles]

**Justin:** But it's fun. It's more fun the other way, isn't it? Everybody loves a project.

**Sydnee:** It was fun. We didn't do it right. But it was—

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** The idea was fun. [chuckles]

**Justin:** [chuckles] What do you mean you didn't do it right?

**Sydnee:** It did— It taste— It did not taste the same as the one we... we drank.

**Justin:** Yes. We should've left it to the professionals, upon further reflection.

**Sydnee:** I will say, in case you're interested, I was trying to figure out where did the term "mamajuana" come from. It comes... from... like this sort of— The French origins of the English word "demijohn," into "domijon." It ma— It references the fact that the bottle it's usually served in is a large, squat bottle with a short, narrow neck.

**Justin:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** And the top is usually covered in wicker. And that's the kind of bottle. You find a lot of mamajuana sold in bottles that look like that. And so... "Domijon," eventually "mamajuan," "mamajuana."

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** "Mother Jane," anyway. All of this is sort of how you get to this iteration of what the beverage is called. Or you could call it "The Baby Maker." I guess "The Stick Lifter."

**Justin:** [snorts]

**Sydnee:** If that is your thing. Or if you wanna call it "Sea Turtle Penis Booze." I'm betting people would know what you're talking about, 'cause there can't be too many.

**Justin:** But Sydnee, the question on everyone's mind, does it work?

**Sydnee:** So there are a lot of ingredients in it, and when people say that it does stuff for health, they're probably pointing to specific ingredients. Like a lot of concoctions have cinnamon; that's not part of the original

recipe, but a lot of them these days do. And there've been a ton of studies to say like does cinnamon reduce your blood pressure. And it's like a lot of herbal or supplement kind of things. Even if it does, you would have to take so much of it to like treat a condition that it's not really useful.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** You know, it's not useful as a medicine. That doesn't mean—

**Justin:** Not like— It's so— You soaked some with rum for a while and then drank the rum, and then it's an antioxidant.

**Sydnee:** Well, I mean that's the other part of it too. Like you're drinking it in rum.

**Justin:** Right.

**Sydnee:** So like I don't know, if we're talking about the effect on your blood pressure or your heart, it's kind of a catch 22. But that is where the like heat health and circulation claims come from. People have always said red wine has antioxidants. There's a lot of mythology around red wine, right?

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** Like that was what we were all advised to do, drink a glass of red wine every night, and then they were like maybe do. And then some drinking is good and then no drinking is good, and [sighs] we go back and forth on alcohol and red wine all the time.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** We all thought that since Italians are so much healthier than us Americans, it must be the wine. So I think that's where that came from. [chuckles]

**Justin:** Oh, okay.

**Sydnee:** That's actually kinda true, the Mediterranean Diet.

**Justin:** Which is—

**Sydnee:** I mean. But I don't know that, again, there's nobody out there recommending you drink red wine for antioxidant effects. Like there's a bunch of—

**Justin:** There's probably somebody out there. You can't say nobody.

**Sydnee:** There's— Okay.

**Justin:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** We are not saying that you should drink red wine all day as a way to anti-oxidise your body.

**Justin:** [chuckles] Okay.

**Sydnee:** Honey has always, right? Like honey is in there, and we see that it—

**Justin:** See also the Sawbones episodes about honey.

**Sydnee:** Exactly. That it fights infection and that it treats inflammation and all this different stuff, that it can kill bacteria. And again like ye— In certain applications, this is— this is actually true about honey, right? So there's some grain of truth there. But again, when you're dumping it in rum and wine drinking it, it's not really doing much of that.

And a lot of these other ingredients are sort of the same things you get with a lot of kind of herbal mixtures that have lots of different things in them. It's like the big anti-inflammatory, antioxidant kind of claims. They'll detoxify you. Nothing that there's any studies to support, there's no hard science behind any of it. It's all like "We did a study in a lab on two mice and we think it went well." And you know— And I'm not trying to say— [chuckles] I'm not trying to degrade any science.

**Justin:** Why is this researcher so sad?

**Sydnee:** Hmm? [laughs]

**Justin:** Their wife just asked about their day, and it's like... [deflatedly] "I don't know. We did experiments on mice, it didn't go well."

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] It's hard to say with some of this stuff because either it's never been tested, or the tests that have done are so small, and they're not done in humans, and so— Or they're done in humans who are already taking something 'cause they believe it worked for them, and so then it's not blinded. So I have no hard science to say it does absolutely anything for you. It's got alcohol in it, so too much of it is bad.

**Justin:** Period.

**Sydnee:** We know that about alcohol, right?

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** There is no evidence that it will... help you... in the bedroom. There is nothing that I can point to.

**Justin:** [snorts]

**Sydnee:** That helps you with erectile dysfunction specifically, or with general libido. I don't— There are no ingredients that I— that I have any science that says will do that. And I do not have any evidence that eating any part of a sea turtle... will help you have an erection. So please, please. Sea turtles are protected in the Dominican Republic. You're not supposed to kill them and eat them. [chuckles] Please don't eat sea turtles.

**Justin:** And don't think you can just take the penis, because that's immoral.

**Sydnee:** So, there—

**Justin:** One— One day.

**Sydnee:** But I will say, with all that being said, try mamajuana. You know, I've never tasted anything like it.

**Justin:** Yeah. It is unique.



**Sydnee:** It is incredibly unique. Yeah. And I thought the one we tasted there was very good, it was really sweet and spicy and floral and herby, and—

**Justin:** Well—

**Sydnee:** I thought it tasted really good. The one [chuckles] we made at home was not that. But.

**Justin:** Who made— Who actually did the making though?

**Sydnee:** I think my dad. [laughs]

**Justin:** Okay, maybe a little bit of corner cutting might have happened there, if I know something.

**Sydnee:** A little— A little ramrodding over there.

**Justin:** Yeah. [wheezes] Rammed it home.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Thank you so much for listening to this episode of our podcast. Thanks to the Taxpayers for the use of their song “Medicines” as the intro and outro of our program. And thanks to you for listening, we really appreciate you. Thank you so much. That’s gonna do it for us. Until next time, my name is Justin McElroy.

**Sydnee:** I’m Sydnee McElroy.

**Justin:** And as always, don’t drill a hole in your head.

[chord]

MaximumFun.org  
Comedy and culture  
A worker-owned network  
Of artist-owned shows  
Supported  
Directly  
By you