

YOUR
COACH
OF THE
MONTH



MARISSA A. ROSS

February's ELLE.com guru will help you hit that wine-drinker sweet spot—right between wino and sommelier

Marissa A. Ross was 22 with “hair down to my ass and heavy bangs” when she moved to Echo Park, Los Angeles, in 2008 to pursue an acting career. In her own words, “I wasn’t very castable.” With \$400 to her name, a dearth of local friends, and a Craigslist roommate situation cribbed from every parent’s nightmare—alcoholic, heroin addict, hoarder—Ross took to spending evenings holed up in her shoebox of a bedroom, drinking Charles Shaw (aka Two-Buck Chuck) and writing sketch comedy infused with wine-related humor.

Three years later, Ross’s comedy attracted the

attention of HelloGiggles cofounder Molly McAleer, who asked her to start a weekly video series about wine. Actually, what McAleer said was, “Dude, you should review all those shitty wines you drink,” Ross recalls, “and I was like, ‘That’s not a bad idea.’” She supplemented her creative income with dog walking and a job doing social media at a Zelda ocarina factory (the ocarina being a nineteenth-century instrument popularized by the video-game series *The Legend of Zelda*, naturally). Six months down the road, Sophia Rossi, also a HelloGiggles cofounder, introduced Ross to Mindy

Kaling, who was in the market for an assistant. The pair got along swimmingly, and Ross worked with Kaling for the next four years.

By 2012, Ross had realized two things: one, that she loved reviewing wine; and two, that all bad wines taste the same. So she signed up for an epiphanic three-wines-for-fifteen-dollars tasting at Silverlake Wine; thought, “This is what real wine tastes like!”, and launched her own site. Wine-allthetime.com is a deliciously accessible entry point to an all-too-often elitist world, and Ross, who’s also currently finishing the forthcoming book *Unwined: A Guide to Drinking, Living, and Keeping It Together* (Plume, 2017), is a font of information garnered through years of hands-on research. Some of her most useful tips?

First and foremost, find a good wine store and forge a relationship with the employees. As Ross says, “If you want to buy [based on an attractive] label, you should buy from somewhere that you already trust the selection.” Second, when the waiter brings the bottle to your table, pours you a finger, and waits expectantly, this is not the time to taste-test and decide whether you made the right choice. This is to see whether the wine is corked (contaminated by chemicals in the cork), which Ross says you’ll know if the wine “smells like wet newspapers or wet dog.” And if you’ve ever shied away from red wine because it gives you headaches, you’re probably just drinking the wrong red. Pick up a pinot noir from a small producer in California’s Central Valley, which won’t have an overabundance of preservatives—chances are you won’t regret it. This month, join Ross at ELLE.com for a four-week intensive on taking your love of vino to the next level.—*Keziah Weir*

CON-NOIS-SEUR

Noun: An expert judge in matters of taste. Become one this month on ELLE.com



FEBRUARY 1

Beginner's Luck

Let Ross lead you through her selection of six easygoing and affordable reds, whites, and rosés that will prep your palate for the month ahead.



FEBRUARY 8

Champ Alternative

With Valentine’s Day on the horizon, Ross curates a list of the best sparkling wines—that aren’t prosecco or champagne—to share with your date. Or, better yet, to keep for yourself.



FEBRUARY 15

Level Up

Elevate your taste! Play a game of “if you like this, try that” to determine the more complicated, challenging types to try next.



FEBRUARY 22

Ms. Manners

Get the lowdown on need-to-know wine etiquette: the dos and don’ts of tasting, drinking, and buying.