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Julie: Welcome to the Love Food podcast, hosted by dietitian and food behavior expert, Julie Duffy Dillon. This authentically engineered series is in the form of a love letter, welcoming you to reconnect with food. Now pour a cup of coffee or margarita and let's begin.

Julie: Hi and welcome to episode 255 of the Love Food podcast. I am Julie Duffy Dillon, registered dietitian and partner on your food peace journey. I'm so glad you're here. Thank you for connecting today. And as you are sifting through all the complicated pieces as it comes down to what you're going to eat at your next meal or snack, you may come upon a really, a really messy kind of stumbling point and that has to do with alcohol. How does your relationship with alcohol connect or disconnect your relationship with food? How does it fit in? Does that make it easier? I certainly have heard that before. Does that make it harder? Definitely heard that too. Or is it kind of neutral, and of course just like so many different things, it's going to depend on your own unique experience. But I have a letter from someone today who is wondering how intuitive eating fits when it comes to alcohol. I actually have had this letter for quite some time and have been sitting on it for a while, and I stumbled upon Brittany Modell on Instagram, talking about this, and I knew I just had to have her help me answer this question. So, you're going to hear from Brittany, who is one of the hosts of the Food Therapy podcast. And I really look forward to exploring this letter, and I hope it helps to provide some prompts for you in maybe a different way, and especially in your own relationship with alcohol and how you want it to fit or not fit as you move forward, or maybe somewhere in between there. So, before we get to this episode's letter and hear from Brittany Modell, a quick word from our sponsor.

Julie (ad break): This episode of the Love Food podcast is brought to you by Ovo Folic. What is Ovo Folic? Well, I had that question too, but Ovo Folic is a new to me inositol supplement. If you have PCOS and you have listened to podcasts on PCOS that I've been interviewed on, or you have done my course, you know that I talk all the time about inositol supplementation. We know that people with PCOS probably have a defect or deficiency with certain inositols, and that's what leads to insulin resistance, issues with ovulation, and higher androgen levels. Adding an inositol supplement to your PCOS regimen is something that for many people, helps to improve ovulation, lower androgens, and lower insulin blood sugars, and even improve symptoms of anxiety. Recently I jumped on the phone with Dr. Pari, one of the founders of the small company called Elan Healthcare that makes Ovo Folic. She also sent me samples to try. I was so impressed with all that Elan Healthcare is doing. It's a small women owned and led company, not a big corporation. They love providing a personal touch. Dr. Pari responds to all customer emails herself. She also oversees every aspect of the manufacturing and the ingredients of Ovo Folic. So I know not all in inositol ingredients are the same. I really like knowing there's a choice in good quality inositol supplements with the recommended 40:1 ratio. Ovo Folic has no taste or smell. I can totally vouch for that, because I tried it myself, and of course has these really high-quality ingredients. Ovo Folic comes in easy to carry single dose packets with, again, that 40 to 1 ratio so you can feel rest assured that you're getting the recommended amount for the maximum

therapeutic effect. So, Ovo Folic has a special offer for Love Food listeners. Use the coupon code foodpeace at checkout for 15% off. Go to [Elanhealthcare.ca](http://Elanhealthcare.ca) and click on their product, Ovo Folic. It's spelled O V O F O L I C, to learn more. Use code foodpeace, all one word, to get 15% off.

Julie: All right, enough of all that. Let's get to this episode's letter.

Julie (as letter writer): This isn't a Dear Food letter. I discovered not long ago that I have an eating disorder. A friend recommended I listen to Love Food, and I've been taking steps to love myself and my body and to stop restricting food. The problem is alcohol. I'm a binge eater, and I'm following the advice in Love Food for dealing with it, but I'm also afraid that I'm becoming a binge drinker. I'm a middle school teacher in a low-income community. My kids are victims of trauma. I pour my heart and soul and energy into them, and then when I come home, I want to de-stress with alcohol. I know there are other ways to take the edge off a stressful workday, but the part of me that wants to eat Nutella quickly in the pantry with the lights off is also the part of me that says "you need a drink girl!" How do I not restrict food, which will lead to binge-eating, but lay off of alcohol? Nutella is one thing but I'm trying to take care of my liver. Love, It's Complicated with Alcohol

Julie: Thank you so much, letter writer, for this note and this, not dear food, dear food letter. As you know, letter writer, I've held onto this note for quite some time. I was waiting for just the right person to answer it. And lo and behold, I stumbled upon a conversation about alcohol intuitive eating on Instagram and I furiously put a comment in and it was on Brittany Modell's, um, Instagram account and um I said, hey, I've been holding onto this letter from someone who's struggling with this. Can you jump on a call with me to help me answer this letter? And she said, yes. So we're going to go ahead and give Brittany a call.

Brittany: Hello Julie.

Julie: Hey Brittany, it's Julie Duffy Dillon. I hope you're doing well.

Brittany: I hope you're doing well as well. I'm so excited to talk with you today.

Julie: Yes, I'm excited. Thank you so much for agreeing to answer this letter. You know, it's one that I've had my hands on for a little while and I've been just waiting for the right person to talk to. So, I was excited to kind of connect with you and find out that you are talking about this. So, when you read through the letter, what was your impression about what this- this person is experiencing?

Brittany: So, first of all, when I, as I was reading this letter, I just want to say I'm so happy to hear that this person is really taking the steps to stop restricting food, and it also sounds like they are giving so much to others, and we want to find a way to help fill up her cup and really start to engage in some of the self-care, because that's also that's really what I'm seeing is, giving so much of yourself, that by the time you get home it's like you don't even know what to do, and you're turning to alcohol as a way to self soothe.

Julie: Yeah, I have a feeling so many people can relate to this, and-

Brittany: yes.

Julie: And also there's like a, almost this like, sect of um the population that relies on alcohol to cope and almost makes it like a normal, of course everybody does this to cope, and how, I was really impressed with this person, being able to name it as maybe this is not how I want to do it. And because I don't think that's the norm, and maybe even, people may even be shunned for it or made fun of or are alienated. So, I don't know if you you're thinking along the same lines.

Brittany: No, I completely agree. I feel like alcohol use has become so normalized in society, and not just alcohol use, but even like binge alcohol use. And a lot of it stems from college and you know, people in their adolescence, but I find that it's somehow turns from a social aspect to at times something more to self soothe later on. And what I think is important to note is that everyone has their own unique relationship to alcohol, right? Similar to help people have their own unique relationship to food, but I do want to clarify that binge eating is not the same thing as binge drinking, but there are some similarities that we can definitely look at, because they're there.

Julie: Oh, that's so interesting. I can't wait to hear what you have to say about that. Something I want to mention, um you know, talking about binge drinking and how a lot of people experience that, especially in their early twenties. And I can remember um you know, experiencing stuff like that with um, you know, my college experience, but then when I was in grad school um, I have a degree of mental health counseling, and a number of the professors in the program had expertise and addictions and they said that research found that most people did not actually binge drink, but the way it was spoken about made it seem like everyone was doing it. And I just yesterday was talking to my 13-year-old who, you know, 13, so starting to like wake up to reality here, and she was like, well, does everyone drink? And you know, she is someone who is into theater and singing. And so she's like, I want to make sure my voice stays clear and everything. And I was like, well, you know, it may seem like everyone does, remembering what my professor said that like, that really not everyone does, but it may feel like everyone does. And so if you decide not to, you may not actually be that abnormal. You know, it just may feel like that. But anyway, I just wanted to mention that part.

Brittany: But I think that's such a great point to discuss too, because it can feel really isolating if you're at a party socializing and you're the only person at that party not drinking. It could almost make you feel like you're doing something wrong, when you're just making a choice that feels good for you, you know, either that day or just in your life.

Julie: Right? Yeah. Yeah, exactly. And especially when people are younger, it may feel like you're the only one. And that's what I was like thinking about. I'm like, I wonder all those times where I thought everyone was, there probably were people in the room who weren't, you know, but um, you know, just that that experience with that enlarged amygdala that happens with adolescence. You know how everything just feels so all or nothing. And in reality, you know, it may have been actually different, and um and yeah, I think it's something really important to kind of point out, like there's, so there's other ways for us to explore how to take care of

ourselves when we're giving to others, and I'm so curious, um what you would recommend it to this letter writer or anybody in a similar place, like as some steps forward.

Brittany: Yes, absolutely. So, the first thing I personally would look at is why do you want to drink alcohol? Right? So is it enhancing the experience and the social atmosphere, or is it to numb yourself, to self soothe, to destress after the workday? And if you do find that you are using it more as a de-stressor and to self soothe, what other tools you have available to you in your toolkit to really deal with some of those life stressors? Also, another thing I want to point out to is, how do you feel when you drink alcohol? Because alcohol, you know, definitely does impact our physical and mental health. And I think as you get older, you start to even realize like holy crap, like a glass of wine feels much different when I'm 40 than when I'm 20.

Julie: Yes.

Brittany: And so, right? It's completely different. So, what happens when you drink alcohol, does it impact your sleep that night? Does it impact your anxiety the next day? Anxiety is a big one that I hear often, and I personally have it where you drink the night before and all of a sudden you wake up and there's, there's something like anxious, like it's a weird concept to think that, but you just feel more anxious and often times it has to do with the alcohol from the evening before.

Julie: Mm, that's interesting. And anxiety is for some people, something that can provoke that relationship with food that feels more stressful. So that's really good insight.

Brittany: Yes. Yeah. Exactly. And the other thing you want to look at too, it's just like, what has your current, what is the current relationship look like? But what's your past relationship with alcohol look like? And also in terms of your family, does addiction around in your family? What has alcohol been used for in the past? So, is it something that was brought to the dinner table every night? It was really social? Or do you have some of these negative memories attached to alcohol? So that's kind of like the first place that I would look when you're examining your own relationship to alcohol. Because the idea is, how can we really create a neutral relationship to alcohol similarly to wanting to create a neutral relationship to food? So, you know, when we eat it's okay to emotionally eat at times, and that definitely serves a purpose, but we also want to make sure that the person has the tools to deal with, you know, certain life stressors, and we're not solely relying on food to cope. And it's very similar in terms of alcohol too. So, if you find yourself really turning to alcohol during these more challenging times, it's something to really look inward and reflect upon.

Julie: Yeah, that's really, I think that's really um, important, and that's where the overlap with food can come in, how it can be similar, like, yeah, if you notice that you're using this to check out and uh, to numb, um, it's, there's no shame in that, you know, and it's coping. I can remember many times during the Covid at home pandemic, like, saying, well, it's maybe not quote healthy coping, and it's coping, so whatever.

Brittany: And by the way, Julie, during the pandemic, I went through this myself, I found myself drinking a lot more during the work week, and I was just trying to deal with whatever was

happening, and I'm usually not a very big drinker, but what I ended up realizing over time and like, I don't really love how I'm feeling, like this is, you know, in- increasing my anxiety levels, it's impacting my ability to sleep. But I think what you said is so key. We want to look at this with nonjudgement and really look at it with compassion, and think about, okay, like, what can I do that will best serve me and really helped me to manage whatever is happening in my life at this point?

Julie: Yes. Yes. Well, and before we move on, are there any other steps that you'd recommend to this person?

Brittany: Yes. So, really, when we're looking at, you know, intuitive eating and how it fits in with alcohol, we want to think about experimentation. So similar- similar to food- similarly to food, I should say, we want to focus on how the alcohol makes us feel. And so again, you're giving yourself the permission to have it. How are you feeling when you have the margarita versus like a glass of wine? Or maybe if you just went for the club soda at dinner, and exploring the different types of alcohol, do you prefer wine or cider or cocktails? Do you prefer mocktail? Would that make you feel better? And so similar to food, really kind of tuning in with your body before you have that drink, checking in with yourself, and also checking in with yourself while you are in the drinking experience. So how are you feeling? Are you hungry? Can you use some water? You know, how would having another drink make you feel, or do you think you should stop? And again, it's, it's coming from a place of compassion and non-judgment but it's really just using it as a time to get curious.

Julie: Those are the words right? Experiment and be curious. Yeah. Those the words, if you can stick to that, it's going to take you probably where you want to go.

Brittany: Yes.

Julie: Yeah, super, super insightful. Um-

Brittany: And-

Julie: I love it. Oh, go ahead, I'm sorry.

Brittany: That's okay. There's actually one more thing that I also want to mention too, which is, um you know, are we using it and enjoying it and it's satisfying and we're appreciating the alcohol? Like how, what does it bring to our life? Because I think it's also important to recognize, some people just don't like the taste of alcohol and there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. And maybe there's a type of alcohol you prefer over others, and maybe alcohol isn't your thing at all. But I think learning to like, really acknowledging what is satisfying to you and what you will enjoy the most in that moment, whether that means alcohol or no alcohol.

Julie: I love it. What is satisfying to you? Yes, I think that's so great. Those are really helpful tips. And I hope that more people can explore this, and I know that you took a deep dive on this conversation on your own podcast. Um, what is the episode number? And tell us a little bit about the podcast that you have?

Brittany: Yeah, so, my podcast is with Lauren Sharp, it's called Food Therapy. I'm actually gonna look up which episode it is, but I believe the title is, can you intuitively drink alcohol?

Julie: Okay.

Brittany: Hold on, let me just pull up.

Julie: Take your time your time.

Brittany: Okay, yeah, so it's episode five and it was on June 6th. Can you intuitively drink alcohol?

Julie: Got it. We'll link in the show notes and um yeah, your podcast is really fun. It's great. I'm glad that you two are doing this podcast together, and we have something on the show called a food peace syllabus, which, if you're new to the Love Food podcast, it's a collection of resources that we've collected over the last five or so years that have helped people on their food peace journey. And you can get to the most updated syllabus at [juliedillonrd.com/freebies](http://juliedillonrd.com/freebies). And I'm hoping you'll put your podcast on the food peace syllabus. But is there anything else that you would like to add to it?

Brittany: No, I, you can find. Well, actually, yes, I'm like, no, but yeah, you can find me @nofoodfears on Instagram. And my website is [www.brittanymodellrd.com](http://www.brittanymodellrd.com). So, I love hanging out on Instagram, talking all things food freedom, intuitive eating, health at every size, mental health, and yeah, so give me a follow and we can meet virtually.

Julie: And that's how I met you, and we started talking about alcohol and intuitive eating.

Brittany: Yes, exactly.

Julie: I think I eavesdropped on some conversation. I love doing that. I'm really grateful that that happened, and if people want to find out more about you, should they go to your website? Is that the best place to go?

Brittany: I would say my website or even Instagram. It's so funny how Instagram has become this like, tool where people are finding me the most. But website or Instagram is the best way to find me.

Julie: Awesome. Well, I will put everything in the show notes for the listener right now and thank you so much, Brittany, for me for helping me to explore this like complicated kind of question, and thank you for handling it with care and your expertise.

Brittany: Thank you so much.

Julie: So there you have it. Letter writer, I hope my conversation with Brittany provided you a roadmap forward. We are so appreciative that you brought this conversation to this podcast, and we look forward to hearing your next steps.

Julie (ad break): Looks like Food has written back, but before we get to food's letter, this episode of a love food podcast was brought to you by my PCOS and Food Peace Course. Get to all the details at [PCOSandFoodPeace.com](http://PCOSandFoodPeace.com). This episode was also sponsored by the makers of the supplement ovofolic, a new way to get your inositol supplement for those of you affected with PCOS. Would you like 15% off? Just for Love Food listeners, go to [elanhealthcare.ca/discount/foodpeace](http://elanhealthcare.ca/discount/foodpeace). There's a link in the shownotes, and remember Elan is spelled E L A N. So go to [elanhealthcare.ca/discount/foodpeace](http://elanhealthcare.ca/discount/foodpeace).

Julie: If you enjoyed this episode of the food podcast, I am so thrilled that you enjoyed it. I hope it's helping you along your food peace journey. If you took a screenshot right now and then shared it in your Instagram stories and tagged me, that would be so awesome. I miss connecting with you, and I would love to see who is listening and how they're experiencing the show. If you would like to help the show grow and reach more listeners, doing that and then also subscribing, sharing an episode, also leaving a rating and review, those are all the things you can do that helps more people have access to food peace All right, enough of all that. Until next time. Take care.

Julie (as Food): Dear it's complicated with alcohol, Hello, Brave One. You are doing such hard, important work, examining your relationship with food. You're not shying away from the hard questions, and your examination of your relationship with alcohol is vital too. As you cope with tremendous stress, hampered by big oppressive systems, consider how the coping vehicle is doing its job. Compassionately sift through how you experience alcohol consumption before, during, and after. What is your body telling you? Everyone has their own unique relationship with alcohol, and lead into your own curiosity to consider your next steps on the journey. Love, food.

Julie: Thank you for listening. I am Julie Duffy Dillon, and this is the Love Food podcast. Do you want access to more food peace? Jump on over to my website and join my email list. There, I share exclusive content that I don't share anywhere else. Get access to these tips and strategies by going to [juliedillonrd.com/signup](http://juliedillonrd.com/signup). And, I look forward to seeing you here next week for another episode of the Love Food podcast. Take care.