

The Zest S12E8

Denise: [00:00:00] It looks like empowerment. It looks like a woman who just knows who she is, right? And when you take a sip of this wine, you feel that power. You just wanna relish it. You, you, you actually moan. Will you take a sip? Like, mm. Yeah. It's that good? It's that good. Okay.

Now moving on to over.

Dalia: Okay. Wait, wait, wait.

You, you gotta say the name one more time 'cause people are Googling right now.

I'm Dalia Colon and this is The Zest: citrus, seafood, Spanish flavor and Southern charm. The Zest celebrates cuisine and community in the Sunshine State. Today she pours wine and she pours into people.

Denise Marsh is a sommelier and certified wine specialist at Society Wine Bar in Tampa's, Ybor City historic District. And Vino isn't the only thing that brings her joy. She's also passionate about empowering people, women in particular. Denise does this through speaking engagements, [00:01:00] international retreats, and her book, it's called *Do It for Your Selfie: A Guide to Loving Yourself, Redesigning Your Life, and Getting Aligned From Within*.

And there's also a companion journal that goes with that book as if that weren't enough. She hosts not one, but two podcasts. One is Getting Raw with Denise. The other is the aptly named Spiritual Growth and Wine: Exploring Self-Discovery Transformation and Wine Conversations. Are you as intrigued as I am?

Well, Denise came to visit us at the WUSF studios on the USF Tampa campus. In this conversation, the Apollo Beach resident shares how she went from battling anxiety into oppression to becoming resilient even after getting rear-ended. Get this on her way to our interview. She explains how wine is a metaphor for our spiritual growth, and she shares practices to help us feel more grounded [00:02:00] before we even get out of bed.

So if you're craving more meaning and some great wine recommendations, then this conversation is for you. Pour yourself a glass of something you love. Get comfy and let's dive in with Denise Marsh.

Okay. Before we even jump into the questions that we had talked about, we're recording this at WUSF Studios on the USF Tampa campus, and you got in a car accident this morning, which I thought you would've just canceled the interview, but you're like, I'll just be like 10, 15 minutes late. So you walk in looking.

Like you just stepped out of a magazine photo shoot. Oh my gosh. And with a smile on your face and the best attitude. So we are here to talk about sort of the intersection of wine and spirituality, but I wanna know like what is it within you that allowed you to walk in that way after the morning that you had?

Denise: Mm. Oh my gosh. Okay. So. If this were [00:03:00] several years ago, I probably would've been a little bit frazzled. I probably would have went off on the guy who hit me all the things right. However, I've learned how to regulate myself. Do I do everything perfect? Abso-freaking-lutely not? Um, however I recognize the bigger picture.

So as I was driving, I can see this guy on my tail and I knew there was a possibility he would hit me, but there was nowhere to go. And if we go back three years ago, I was actually in a very similar situation. This guy was driving towards me really fast and. I could see that he was going to hit me. There was nowhere for me to go.

He hit me so hard. From that, I did end up having severe nerve damage in my brain, severe nerve damage in my spine. I was told by the specialist that I would not regain complete control of my right side. I was also told that there's a possibility I would not [00:04:00] regain full cognitive function, and I also heard them.

I received it, believed it for a moment, and then said, no, this is not my story. Fast forward to months. Um, I did make a full recovery, however, I say all that to say this accident, it was just an accident, right? It was someone being negligent, but it was also me being aware that this could have been much worse and I'm heading somewhere amazing to have a great conversation and all as well.

So I was able to bless and release. I did tell the young man, please do better and I wish you well.

Dalia: Amazing. So what are some of those tools you use to regulate yourself so that you don't go off on people or let it ruin your day?

Denise: So taking a breath. So I'm gonna give a few very simple tools. Because sometimes we think that in order to do better and be better, we have to go through all these big, big, huge shifts, which, yeah, that's part of it too.

But some really simple things. Breathing, intentional breathing. So when we [00:05:00] actually take an intentional breath, it actually helps to slow us down. It helps the blood to flow a lot better. It helps our brain to also process things a lot clearer. So taking a breath, asking myself, how am I feeling in this moment?

How would I like to feel? Yeah, that's a very important question. How am I feeling in this moment? It's recognizing that I'm feeling something and then following that up with, well, how would I like to feel? I would like to feel calm in this moment so I don't go off on this young man, you know? So it's taking a moment.

So many times we're so busy trying to figure out what everyone else is doing, what everyone else is feeling, but we have to check in with ourselves. So breathing that intentional breath. Talking to ourselves, asking How am I feeling, asking, how am I acting? How am I showing up in this moment? So we cannot control things outside of us, but we can control how we show up in the spaces that we're in.

Dalia: Ooh, that's so good. Okay. And we are gonna talk about the wine. I know people are like, what podcast am I listening to right now? [00:06:00] But I think that ties in so well to the title of your book, do It for Your Selfie, and you walked in here with gifts for myself and my colleague Alex Ebron. You walked in here with copies of the book and the The Transformation Journal.

30 days of raw. I love the title. Do it for your selfie because it's probably hard to feel compassion for the guy who was riding your tail and then hit you on 75 this morning. But if you won't take a breath for him, you can do it for yourself. Yeah, because you deserve to feel. Good in your body and good about the choices you made at the end of the day.

So tell me a little bit about this path that you've been on to arrive at a place where you can regulate yourself. 'cause I feel like a lot of adults walking around are just toddlers. Mm-hmm. You know, they, they have no control over their emotions, what they say they feel entitled. So how did you come to the place where you could do it for your selfie and then write this book to share it with us?

Denise: Yes.

So back in the day. [00:07:00] I was a bit of a control freak. Like I had to control things, not necessarily people, just outcomes. I needed to control things. I wanted to be in control of things, and if things didn't go the way I wanted them to go, I didn't process that very well. And there was also a, a. A time in my life where I had severe anxiety and to the point I thought I would have anxiety for all of my life.

I thought that was just what it was. I was on medication for it. I was seeing a therapist for it, and it became the thing of this is just what I have to live with. However, I realized that. A lot of the things I was telling myself was being in a victim mindset. We don't always think of the things we do as being a victim.

We think this is just what it is. But if I'm consistently telling myself I have anxiety, if I keep telling myself that I survived an abusive relationship, if I keep telling myself those things, I keep replaying that. I keeps being part of my story. So it goes to, well, what do I [00:08:00] want to have as part of my label, as part of my identity?

During the darkest times of my life was when my daughter was young, she was a toddler. And you would think that as a mom, you would do the things for your children, like, get better for your child, get better for your family, but. So many women aren't able to do that because it's not about their child. It's not about their children, it's not about their family.

It's within them. I had to get right for me in order to be right for her. I say that because so many times we carry the burden of I need to do this for other people, and I'm gonna ask you to please reconsider and do it for you first. And this will help you to be able to be better for other people, those who depend on you, those who need you, those who are in your community.

So. What got me here was going through all of the things that I no longer wanted to go through and having to take a different approach in my life. So I had therapy, which was amazing. I started to seek out different spiritual [00:09:00] practices and different mentors, and also just taking a look at my life and just all the different areas and saying, okay, how would I like for this to be different and what do I need to do for it to be different?

Also, take responsibility. Take responsibility for what you're doing and own up to it and stop making excuses as to, well, this happened to me because of this, and this is why I am this way. Alright, that was then. I don't care if it was five minutes ago. Five days ago. Five years ago. Today is a new day. How do you want to feel now?

Ooh. How do you wanna show up today?

Dalia: Ooh, this is so good. Yes. We love to be the victim 'cause then we don't have to change anything. Mm-hmm. It's out of our hands. Mm-hmm. I love that. Why do you address this to women in particular? Because, I mean, there's men listening too. At least one. Hey Andrew.

Denise: I believe that this message is for all humans.

I really, really do. However, I have a space in my heart, this soft spot for women because one, I am a woman. I [00:10:00] understand what a lot of us have to go through as women, and I know that a lot of us will carry that responsibility of. Being and doing for everyone else and putting ourselves on the back burner and then wondering why we're exhausted, wondering why we are anxious, wondering why we're depressed, wondering why we're angry.

Well, because you are giving away all of your energy, your time, your resources to everyone else, and feeling good about that, but not feeling good within your own self. And at the end of my life, I don't wanna ever look back and say I didn't live to my fullest potential and living the way that felt good for me.

And that is not selfish. That is self full. 100% self full. Self, full people. Okay? So this message is for everyone. However, women we do tend to carry that guilt of doing things for ourselves beyond just the pedicure, beyond just the girls' day out, but seriously doing the things for us that feel good just because they feel good for us and it doesn't have to [00:11:00] do with anyone else.

Dalia: Yeah. Ooh, so well said. How old is your daughter now? 25. Wow. Mm-hmm. So even if you're doing, first of all, no one would believe that you had her when you were three, but even if you were doing things for your daughter when she was younger, she's now living her own life. Yes. So at the end of the day, you're with yourself.

You have to be happy with yourself. Yes. Okay. So, so people are listening. For the, the pep talk and the wine. Yes. I, I DMed you on Instagram and I said, Hey, I wanna talk about the intersection of wine and spirituality, which seems to be your sweet spot. Yes. So tell me. Tell me why that is? Why do those things go well together?

Denise: Yeah, so I, first of all this, this conversation is so fun. I love talking about wine and how it intersects with spirituality. So I've been in the wine world for over 20 years. I worked in the industry for a long time, then got out of it.

And so when you think about it, wine makers, they have their part, which is to [00:12:00] make wine, but there is a lot that has to happen from those grapes, from the vines, from the soil.

To get into the bottle, to get into the glass, to get into your mouth, right. There's a lot. The wine maker doesn't have full control. The winemaker has to be okay with surrender. The winemaker has to be okay with faith. The wine maker has to be okay with letting the climate do its thing. They have to pivot, they have to get innovative.

They have to do things that others may question. They have to trust their gut. They have to do all of these things just to get the wine in the bottle. And they also have to understand that there's going to be times where the wine doesn't come out well, right? The vineyard isn't going to do as well. The atmosphere, the climate is going to not be what they want it to be, and they have to learn how to pivot from all of that.

If we turn that around and we think about our own self, your spirituality, whatever that is to you, whoever it is you believe in, whatever [00:13:00] that is, that's your personal journey. But when we think about that, that is a personal relationship and through spirituality, you have to learn to surrender, you have to have faith, you have to trust.

You have to be able to pivot. You have to understand that you're gonna have storms, you're gonna have all kind of things come at you, and you have to learn how to adjust to that and switch courses if need to. And so. That's just a part of how they intersect together.[00:14:00]

Dalia: What were you doing in the wine industry?

Denise: So I was actually working in fine dining. I opened fine dining restaurants. I trained the front of the. Staff and with that comes with training in wine as well.

Dalia: You're a sommelier.

Denise: Yes, I am.

Dalia: That's the part you're not saying? Yes. So I'm gonna say it. So I'm, it's very impressive.

Denise: I'm, and I'm also a certified wine specialist. Incredible. So I do have certifications as well. And I love so many things about wine and I thought that once I left, that was just it, you know, until last year. Last year, I was just going through a lot of different shifts and transitions in my life and I knew something was coming and I didn't know what that was, but there was a voice.

It was nine o'clock at night. There was a voice that said, call the wine bar. There was a wine bar, literally five minutes from my house that I've had, had only been to one time, and I lived in that house for seven years. I only been there one time in Apollo Beach. In Apollo Beach, and I had. Been to other, I go to wine bars all over, but I had only been to that one once and the voice had to call that particular wine [00:15:00] bar.

I'm like, okay, and I trust the voice called, long story short, I got a job there. During that time, I thought it was just about being at the wine bar, but I saw how it was also integrating into my current business. And what I do with women, and so it, it beca it worked really, really fast. Where now I'm integrating wine into the spirituality, into my retreats, into the events that I do and into speaking engagements as well.

Dalia: You spoke so beautifully about how we are all sort of like a fine wine that's being developed over time and we can't control it, but what about just the physical act of drinking wine? Yes. What do you love about it? Yes. Is there, is there a wine that that really just makes you feel good and, and it's like a little cup of joy?

Yes.

Denise: Yes. My intro to to Wine was a chardonnay at a family party when I was. A child?

Dalia: No, judge. Oh, statute of limitations, I think is over.

Denise: You know, like you get like a sip, like, you know, they give you a [00:16:00] sip of something. So I've always had this love of wine, like I love the way it tastes. I love the way it tingles in my body, you know?

And I. I appreciate the wine. So when I think about wine, I do enjoy wine. I enjoy drinking it. I love it as an experience. I use wine in different ways. I use it just because I wanna drink it, like I want some wine, it tastes good. This is what I want right now. I use it, um, as part of like a ritual. And so that ritual could look like I'm making a promise to myself or making a statement to myself or

claiming something and then taking a sip of the wine as kind of the seal of approval for myself.

I love using it as an experience. Wine is beautiful on its own, and it's even better when it's paired with something. So it's a beautiful thing. And so there's new world wines and there's old World wines, and I know that you're not asking about that, but I will say this. Old World Wine. Those are wines that are from Italy, Germany, France, and [00:17:00] I prefer Old World wines.

New World wines are the America, south America or South Africa, Australia. Those wines I do like and appreciate as well. But if I had to choose, I'm choosing Old World, and the reason being is because they are really more about where the wine is from. Region, they're terroir. And so when I'm drinking wine from France, when I'm drinking wine from Italy, I'm tasting the soil, I'm tasting the climate, I'm tasting the family tradition, and so it's taken me on a journey without having to actually be there.

If I want something a little bit wild, something a little bit spontaneous, something a little bit experimental, then I'm going to go to New World because. They like to do that over there, right? And so I might enjoy something from Washington or I might enjoy something from Chile and get a kick out of like, you know what, they experiment with some things here and this came out really good.

So again, and comparing that to life, comparing that to life, right? When you think about it, [00:18:00] sometimes you try something and it doesn't work out, but you said, but how can I remix this? How can I blend this up where it turns out in a way that might work even better than my original plan? That's what winemakers do.

Dalia: Hmm. That's what cooks do too. I'm like, I did that last night. Yes. Wow. Okay. So can you recommend an old world and a new world wine that will just kinda help us to celebrate life?

Denise: 100%. So New World. My favorite wine maker, David Phinney, who's over the label, Oran Swift. This is from California. I'm very particular about wines from California and the Oran Swift line.

Definitely my fave. Definitely, definitely particularly machete. That wine is incredible and David Phinney uses the Burgundian style, which is probably why I like it a lot more. But it is beautiful and the labels, labels, plural for this

particular wine are stunning. They're [00:19:00] high gloss pictures of the gorgeous women in front of these muscle cars.

And the wine is an invitation to pleasure. Like truly, when you look at the wine label, it just looks like sensuality. It looks like sexuality. It looks like empowerment. It looks like a woman who just knows who she is, right? And when you take a sip of this wine, you feel that power. You just wanna relish it.

You, you, you actually moan. When you take a sip, like, mm, yeah, it's that good? It's that good. Okay. Now moving on to, oh, okay.

Dalia: Wait, wait, you, you gotta say the name one more time. 'cause people are Googling right now.

Denise: So it's machete, so M-A-C-H-E-T-E. And there are several different labels for this particular one.

So there's a different woman, so if you get two or three bottles, there's two or three women on there. I'm telling you, it's gorgeous. And the wine is worth it. It's worth it.

Dalia: Okay. You, you sold that wine.

Denise: It's worth it. Uh, for Old World, I'm going to go with a coltun to buy a bi hot, and that is a French wine.

[00:20:00] And that one also is definitely one that you're tasting the soil, you're tasting the earth, you're tasting the climate. It makes you feel like anything is possible when you're drinking it. It makes you feel like small and big at the same time. And what I mean by that, small and big at the same time. Small where, Hmm, what I'm experiencing isn't that big of a deal big.

Whereas I can do anything I want. This world is, is offering me so many opportunities and I wanna take a sip and think about what those opportunities are and go for it.

Dalia: Ooh, I am loving hearing you talk about this wine. You need to work in marketing for these companies. It sounds like a vacation in a glass.

And speaking of vacations, I know you host these transformational retreats. Yes. And you emailed me and you said you have upcoming retreats in Portugal, the Netherlands, and Belgium. And Tuscany, Italy. So my question is, do you

need me to carry your bag? But really I wanna know [00:21:00] about these retreats. I mean, they sound incredible, just to even be around you.

Oh, with your energy and just how inspiring you are is incredible. But tell me what people can expect if they embark on one of these retreats.

Denise: Oh my gosh. Well, first of all, thank you for your beautiful, kind and loving words. I receive those. Thank you. The retreats, so I call these the raw retreats. My business, my company is redesign and align from within, or we call it raw for short.

And these retreats are truly transformational. So there's always a different theme for the retreats, and we work on a lot of inner healing, a lot of self work, mindset shifting, being able to release to receive. And I keep these retreats pretty intimate. And so typically there may be between three and six women at the retreats, and that's because there's so much energy being exposed, received, given.

And so I want to make sure that I am available to all the women. But what's most important is that these women are coming there [00:22:00] for a particular reason, and the reason they think they're going there is not really what it's all about. Something else comes up while they're there, because something powerful happens when you're away from your day-to-day normal routine, and you're in a space where you're solely focused on you.

And you have the support of others there that won't judge you, that won't shame you, but that's your, that's just there to hold space for you. But also you being able to have that time to process things you've been putting on the back burner, things you may have forgotten about, things that you need more clarity on, and you truly walk away from these experiences shifted.

You walk away, changed, you walk away feeling more powerful, more brave, having more clarity. Having more presence with self. And so these retreats are not just something to cross off your bucket list, if that's what you're looking for. This is not the journey for you. This is if you're ready to make a shift in your life.

And so attending a retreat, it's a gift [00:23:00] to yourself. It's a gift to you saying, I'm ready to do things different when I go back home.

Dalia: Do it for your selfie.

Denise: Do it for your selfie.

Dalia: Oh my gosh. I feel like I was on a little retreat. Oh my God. I do wanna ask somebody listening is a teetotaler or maybe they've had a problem with addiction or something like that.

Mm-hmm. So is there a substitute? I cannot wait to dive into your books. Do it for your selfie and the 31 Days of Raw Transformation Journal and. My ritual is to sit on the lanai and drink my tea and have my little spiritual, maybe 10 minutes. Sounds like I need to stretch it out, but is, would you recommend tea or something else for the non-alcohol drinkers?

Denise: 1000000000000000%. So if you don't drink wine, that's okay. If you want the experience of wine, you can do non-alcoholic wines if that's what you would like to try. There are lots of beautiful options out there as far as non-alcoholic. Bubbly sparkling wine, non-alcoholic, red and white wines and non-alcoholic roses.

If you just wanna stay clear of all of that, you can [00:24:00] still do tea. So at home, I'm usually drinking tea, water, or wine. It's one of those, right? And tea is a ritual all on its own. If you are a juice drinker or. Just water. That's fine. But if you wanna make it fancy, get yourself a beautiful goblet to your beautiful glass.

You know? And make it your own. It doesn't, it doesn't have to be wine, right? It can be just, I'm pouring this water into my sacred glass and just going to sip. You can still moan with water. Okay. It's fine.

Dalia: You are the best. Thank you for coming.

Denise: Thank you for having me. This was so much fun. Thank you so much.

Dalia: Denise Marsh is a sommelier and certified wine specialist at Society Wine Bar in Tampa's, Ybor City Historic District. She's also the author of Do It For Your Selfie and the Companion Journal, and she hosts the podcast Getting Raw with Denise and spiritual growth and wine. There's so [00:25:00] much to dig into. Plus, she's got those awesome retreats. I know you want more information on all of it. So you can find a link to Denise's website on our website, the zest podcast.com. I'm Dalia Colon. I produce the zest with Andrew Lucas and Alexandria Ebron. The Zest is a production of WUSF, copyright 2025, part of the NPR network.