

Want a Drink?

Use the Buddy Method

GLASS THAT ATTACHES TO A BEER OR WINE BOTTLE IS A HIT NOVELTY ITEM **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

WHEN YOU'RE READY to kick one back, who would have thought to make it more fun than pouring a glass of one's spirit of choice?

The Guzzle Buddy® is a glass that attaches directly to your beer or wine bottle. Just insert the Guzzle Buddy by screwing it directly into the top of your bottle. The co-inventors, Jennifer Sullivan and Randy Rothfus, are a sister and brother-in-law team who have known each other since preschool in Carlisle, Iowa. The two recently secured a deal with Daymond John from "Shark Tank."

Sullivan has a degree in geology and worked in the copper industry; Rothfus has three children's books currently on Amazon.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): How did this invention come about?

Randy Rothfus (RR): We both love wine, so one day Jennifer saw an old sitcom that had a character holding a glass attached to the top of a bottle. Naturally we had to have it, so we scoured the internet and no such product existed. That's when we decided we would make our own.

EGT: Of what is the Guzzle Buddy made?

RR: We have the borosilicate hand-blown wine and beer glass we manufacture in China, and we have the Tritan copolyester unbreakable plastic wine and beer glasses made in the United States. Both glass and plastic are BPA-free, freezer safe and dishwasher safe.

EGT: How many prototypes did you need to make?

RR: This proved to be the most difficult part. Of course, we saw a TV prop, but designing it for commercial availability to the public was where the engineering was involved. We had specific requirements. We needed this to attach securely to the opening of as many bottles as possible. There is a bigger diameter variance than you might imagine between wine, beer, soda and cider bottles.

We also needed it to provide a seal so it didn't leak when drinking. That is where we got the idea to create a tapered LFGB silicone sleeve over a glass stem, which would engage a wide variety of bottles and fit securely.

We also needed to have adequate flow of liquid from the bottle into the glass. This was another obstacle because we needed the thickness strength of the glass stem, but we didn't want to compromise the flow. The greater the thickness, the lesser the flow. We went back and forth for over five months and

Randy Rothfus and Jennifer Sullivan overcame many obstacles in the prototyping process for the Guzzle Buddy.



The U.S. patents cover claims ranging from how the glass attaches to the bottle to the way it aerates wine during consumption.

approximately 10 prototypes until we finally made the decision to go into production. Once we got them into the customers' hands, we still tweaked the sleeve based on feedback we received to fit an even broader array of glasses and make it easy to put in and out of bottles. We designed the plastic versions to utilize the exact same silicone sleeve as the glass versions.

Many people have asked us if there is a valve that prevents the liquid from going back into the glass. No, there isn't. It is a free-flowing design.

EGT: Tell us about your patents.

RR: We have registered design and utility patents in the United States. These cover a wide variety of claims, ranging from the way the glass attaches to the bottle to the way it aerates the wine during consumption. We also have patents in the E.U., U.K, Canada and patents pending in China.

EGT: How are you selling? To retail or on your website, or both?

RR: We sell from our website, Amazon.com, Amazon.ca, Amazon.co.uk and all European Amazon channels. We are in Brookstone, Hammacher Schlemmer, Francesca's, a growing list of small independent boutiques, novelty shops, and even Ace Hardware stores! We have sold product almost everywhere from Germany to New Zealand and beyond.

EGT: Tell us about your "Shark Tank" experience.

RR: We were approached by "Shark Tank" producers to see if we had interest. That's like a foot in the door, but then you need to go through a process of vetting and discussions. Many people apply or attend a pitch day, but not many are picked—and as you move forward, they cut companies out until they have a group they want to film.

Once we made it, we were incredibly excited but also scared and nervous to go in front of the sharks. The one thing I can say to people looking into going on "Shark Tank" is that you'd better know your numbers and your business. One small mess-up, and it's like blood in the water.

EGT: What is your marketing strategy?

RR: We do very little marketing. We have Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts (@guzzlebuddy), and we try to provide the best content we can and interact with customers, making it a fun experi-

ence. Our product is quite viral when compared to other types of glassware. All it takes is for one video to come out, and sales go through the roof.

EGT: Any plans to add to your product line?

RR: We are very focused on getting the Tritan plastic versions to market. We are manufacturing them and pre-selling them now; we hope to begin fulfilling orders soon. We do have other ideas swirling around in our heads, but we need to stay focused for now.

EGT: What advice would you give our readers?

RR: Everyone says, "Oh, I could have thought of that," or "I saw this—I should make it." I think the reason a lot of people say that is because it sounds simple. But in reality, you have to be willing to invest a lot of time, money and effort into these pursuits. You have to be willing to take that idea and fail multiple times before you get it right, and I think a lot of people would give up early or not even try. 🍷

Details: guzzlebuddy.com



Guzzle Buddy beer and wine glasses feature a free-flowing design with fun in mind.

Books by **Edie Tolchin** (egt@edietolchin.com) include "Fanny on Fire" (fannyonfire.com) and "Secrets of Successful Inventing." She has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. Edie has owned EGT Global Trading since 1997, assisting inventors with product safety issues and China manufacturing.

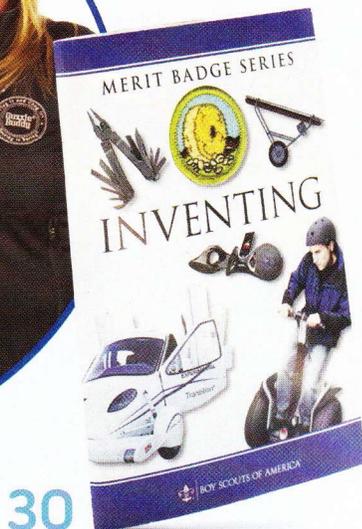


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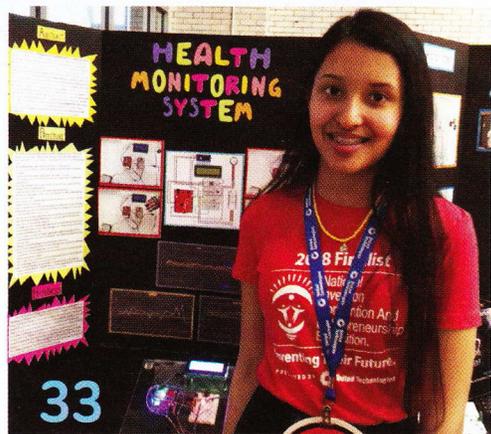
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On the StartupBus

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