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## Coming Together at the Table

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Tia Elder

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### Coming Together at the Table

I lived with two girls from Russia. They were each from different areas originally, but they have a home in St. Petersburg. What we learned was that we had more similarities than differences. My roommate named Anna had studied as a sommelier, and I had done an equivalent certification of WSET in the U.S. Even small things like the ways we analyzed and smelled/ tasted wine were different and similar. She smelled the wine from a different part of the glass than me, and always was finding opposite aromas of fruits and flowers I had never been exposed to. We connected over our passion for learning about wine and were similar in the way we wrote about the wine after analyzing it.

Anna did not let the cold weather of Russia hold her back from activities, something I find myself guilty of as an Oregonian. Her activities consisted of sailing in the summer, going on hikes, diving into ice pools then entering an extremely hot sauna. She discussed the way businesses are open extremely late in Russia, where she would get her nails done in the middle of the night if she wanted to. She spoke of having buckets of caviar in their fridge, which was extremely surprising to me with how expensive it is in the U.S.

We would spend hours around our dinner table discussing Russian vs American politics and I was surprised to find that we had similar opinions about each other's governments. Overall, we both valued human connection above all else. We valued kindness, friendship, and giving. I learned that the citizens from the US and Russia are not so different. I became more understanding of the people that live there and became more grateful for the freedoms I hold as a US citizen.