

## **Happy Birthday to Me**

For my 25th birthday I found myself sitting in the passenger seat of my girlfriend's car. As we entered hour two of waiting in line at the Orlando Convention Center for free COVID-19 testing, I kept myself busy playing Animal Crossing on my Nintendo Switch.

A week earlier I had thought I was getting a cold. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary since coronavirus had already passed through my house and I made it out safe. Then, on Christmas day, I took a bit of pizza and realized there was just nothingness. I could feel the sensation of what I knew the taste was supposed to be, but there was only texture. I didn't immediately panic, thinking it was probably due to the congestion of my cold. It wasn't until my girlfriend mentioned that loss of taste is definitely a COVID-19 symptom that the realization dawned on me.

The soonest I could get tested was on my birthday, which also happened to be the day I noticed my sense of smell had completely disappeared. Even though I still had two fully functioning eyes, I felt like I was operating completely blind. It never occurred to me how much the taste and the smell of food was so essential to my enjoyment of eating.

It was a humbling experience, and I'm incredibly grateful that the loss of senses was my only real symptom. I tried to use my tasteless time wisely and eat all the undesirable food that has long since been shoved to the back of the pantry. Though, I would be lying if I didn't say the day I got my tasting back, I ordered all my favorite foods for contactless delivery. It was my little 2021 belated new years celebration.