

I Made a Huge Mistake

diaspora, pineapple on pizza, & a search for home



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AUG 02, 2025

Excuse me? I'm here to apologize.

I believe I committed a Cardinal sin last week, everyone.

Yes, I did it: I ordered a pizza at an Italian-influenced Croatian restaurant I love.

& as an expat, you know *exactly* what I asked for on that pizza.



I can never get enough of this view.

On & off, I get twinges of homesickness, feeling displaced, & just general diaspora. While I didn't always have the words to describe it,

I've always been a very grounded person—literally, physically grounded, tied to certain locations, trees, smells, small shops. My identity was sprinkled around these spaces, & I'd feel whole again when I visited them.

Very, very slowly, almost five years into my move, I've begun to sprinkle my soul, just slightly, on the Croatian coast. Very little, I'll admit; I feel aimless, directionless, horizonless most of the time, without any sort of mile marker or anchor to hold me down. & sometimes that gets to me.

I ease it through very basic pleasures, like a feel-good movie, a comfort TV show, poems that I love, or a favorite meal. & I don't know, but looking at the menu that day, my mind went back to the crispy, garlic crust I used to order, with extra sauce, cheese, pepperoni done to a crisp, & pineapple.

I asked, "*Mogu ja jedan Havaian, molim vas.*"

The gentleman serving us is one of my husband's friends, & loosely becoming one of mine, was one of the owners of the restaurant & stepped in to take our little family of five's orders. He smiled, eyebrows raised, said, "Oh!" & submitted our order.

When the food came out, he had to make two trips & brought out my meal last. He made a joke that he really liked me but was disappointed in me for what I had ordered.

I laughed & waved him away, because I knew he was joking, but inside, that little jab hurt more than it should have.



(yes, it was delicious)

While also not feeling rooted, I also feel like I stick out like a sore thumb —this incredibly ugly, jarring, obvious thing in a coastal town that sparkles with air, brilliant stones, & the occasional ear-shaped abalone that shines so brilliantly, sometimes metallicly, it looks like someone has painted it with glitter or metallic paint.

Or like pineapple on pizza in the middle of an Italian restaurant in a European town, ordered in shaky Croatian.

I'm in that stage of living here where I really need to think & behave like a local & do the best I can to *blend in*. And ordering pineapple on pizza, no matter how homesick I was, was not the way to do that. It was just another way to “other” myself, make me feel unaccepted by one of my husband's friends (& again, I know it was a joke; he's an incredibly kind &

funny man), & give myself another example of why I feel so out of place, less-than, & certainly never enough.

This all sounds so dramatic, but I think it's a reality that not enough of us who have moved talk about: sometimes the place you've moved to doesn't give you that feeling of "home," & the only place you feel like you could be unapologetically yourself is thousands (5,300+) of miles away.



Complete (& naturally metallic) ear-shaped abalone. Isn't she stunning?

So, yeah, will I be ordering a *Pizze Hawaiian* while out in public anytime soon? No, probably never again.

~~After all, if I really "need" it, I can make it at home next time. Maybe I could even swap in kulen to recreate the pepperoni & pineapple combo~~

~~I'm *actually* looking for (though ham & pineapple are fine).~~

~~(Or, hear me out & trust me, a white sauce pizza with just a little bit of chopped bacon for saltiness, topped mostly with arugula, & very thinly sliced strawberries. Seriously. Bake the pizza, & while it's still *bubbling hot*, top it thickly with arugula, sprinkle on some slices of strawberry, & wait maybe five minutes before enjoying. It's a sweet & salty experience that you won't believe, & especially if you like summer salads with strawberries thrown in, I'm *confident* you will like this.)~~

All jokes & recipes aside, it's been almost five years. I just want to feel like I'm home.



My two beautiful, rambunctious boys (Landon left, Grayson right), who happily accepted some of the pineapple slices off my pizza & gave me their crusts

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