

Welcome & Dobro Došli to Mediterranean & Me!

Our feet may be hanging off of the too-short bed, but this life has its other charms.



MCKENZIE LYNN TOZAN

MAY 18, 2024

I remember the very first time I watched *Julie & Julia* starring Meryl Streep & Amy Adams, I was so taken by Meryl's portrayal of Julia Child's excitement upon entering her Parisian home for the first time. She elegantly twirls her way through the space, ending up in a beautiful, classy, & just so *Parisian* bedroom with fluffy floral prints.

And then Julia happily flops down on her bed, only to discover that she's much too tall for her, her feet dangling off the end of the bed.

After living in coastal Croatia for 3 years, I realize that living as an expat, mom of 3 bilingual kids, & freelance writer is a lot like sleeping with feet hanging off of the bed.

The situation is imperfect... but that bedroom is still stunning.

I've dealt with culture shock, bureaucracy, language learning troubles, food sensitivities, undiagnosed conditions, family estrangement, & staggering social anxiety... but I've lived on a beautiful coast, experienced healing springs & mudbaths, taken up hiking & bike trailing, & started a literary magazine, too. To use a cliché, there can't be dark without light; there can't be immersion without some cultural adjustment, & there can't be beautiful beds without feet dangling off of them (well, maybe you've got me there).



I want *Mediterranean & Me* to be a space for cultural stories, art, food, & growing into this new version of me that 20-year-old me never could have dreamed of. When I think back on what my 20-year-old self wanted for me, I struggle to think that she wouldn't be disappointed with where I am now—but now I realize that she'd only be disappointed at first because she'd be surprised at the direction I'd gone instead.

For you, dear readers, I hope this Substack can be a source of inspiration for you, as well as unique, translated, and modified recipes, short Croatian language tidbits, travel recommendations, & tips on what it's really like being a traveling freelance writer.

This Newsletter's Recipe: Easy & Fudgy Brownies

For this week, I just wanted to share a recipe with easy ingredients I had lying around my house—like old bananas that needed to be used, like, yesterday.

This recipe only has three ingredients, makes little mess in the kitchen, is gluten-free & vegan, & has no added sugars.



All you need for this recipe is:

- 3 medium ripe bananas (I'm using 4 today, but they're small)
- 50 grams (1/5 cup) Cocoa powder (I used natural cocoa to avoid added sugars)
- 120 grams (1/2 cup) smooth/creamy peanut butter

What happens next is simple:

- Preheat your oven to 180°C (350°F).
- Peel & mash your bananas, sift in your cocoa powder (you could pour it into the bowl, but sifting will give you more consistent brownie batter), & mix them until just mixed. Add your peanut butter & (again) mix until just mixed.
- You could add other ingredients to put your own spin on it, like chocolate chips, nuts, or sea salt! I have a lot of tree nuts in my

diet, so I might try that next time!

- Transfer your mixture to a greased & lined pan (I use cooking spray & parchment paper since I can't use butter & standard flour).
 - Bake for 22 to 30 minutes (mine takes 25 to 27 minutes depending on the weather outside; yes, the weather, because of our level of elevation!).
 - Let them cool, slice, & enjoy your simple, fudgy goodness!
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Probably Your First Croatian Lesson

Unless you're like me or have Croatian family or friends, you more than likely didn't choose Croatian as your next language study! Most language learning apps, like Duolingo & Rosetta Stone, do not even offer Croatian. (Mondly and Drops both do, & there are some Croatian-specific language-learning apps out there.)

Here's a little Croatian for you, just for the fun of it!

- Bok! (like "boat" but with a K) - Hi!
 - Dobar Dan! (dough-bar dahhhn) - Hello! or Good Day!
 - Vidimo se! (vee-dee-mo-say) - See you soon!
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Thank you for joining me! It feels really affirming to finally get this newsletter started, & I'm so excited to share more stories, recipes, & tips/trivia with you.

Until next time! Želim vam prekrasan tjedan! (Have a wonderful week!)

Thank you for being here! **All content is free for everyone to read**, though there might be some book content in the future that will be exclusive to paid subscribers. If you'd like to support me another way, [you can buy me a coffee!](#) 😊☕ Thanks & Hvala!

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