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Moving to a new country provides wonderful opportunities to see new places, meet new people and experience a million and one new things. I recently ran into a list of ***100 reasons to become an expatriate***. I like lists; I was an expatriate, so I immediately gave it a read through. In spite of its length, it was hardly exhaustive. After all, every expatriate has his or her own particular, often peculiar, rhymes and reasons for pulling up stakes and moving to another country.

Some people move abroad to fulfill a lifelong dream while others are chasing a fantasy. They want to live like Ernest Hemmingway, Josephine Baker or Jack Kerouac. They dream of wrestling fish or picking grapes, falling in love and capturing it all in the next, great American novel. Does it count if the book is written overseas? Doesn't that make it the next, great Tunisian novel or French novel or at the very least expatriate novel?

Some people change countries for practical reasons; a new job, to learn a language or because there is no extradition treaty with the United States. Others have more romantic motives; a new spouse, dreams of finding Prince Charming or if he's unavailable, to date an Italian (a real Italian, one with an Italian accent). Some expatriates are running away, some are running to and some are just running.

I was an accidental expatriate. I sort of lucked into it. I was in my mid-twenties and finishing graduate school when I was offered an internship. One thing led to another and another and another and somehow or other I forgot to come home.

For almost two decades.

For most of that time I lived in Switzerland and traveled all over Europe, the Middle East and Africa. For a year or two I lived on the west coast and traveled all over the world. And yes, with my New England roots, I indeed felt like an expatriate in sunny California. I never picked grapes or wrestled a big fish although for a while I harbored a small fantasy of writing a book. I even picked out the title: *Notes from aBroad*. As far as I can remember these were my whys and wherefores when I picked up stakes, moved and then stayed in Switzerland:

1. For heaven sakes why not? It's only eight weeks. And I can spend a month in Italy afterwards.
2. And then...it's only for a year. I can see lots more than Italy! (And I did!)
3. And then...it's a great job offer; really interesting work at a decent salary! The US is in the middle of a recession so interesting jobs are few and far between, any job is few and far between. Besides it's only for two more years.
4. Because Switzerland is in the middle of it all. It's quick and easy to get anywhere from there... to visit the Louvre and eat oysters in Paris, to buy a suede jacket and eat pasta in Florence, to bicycle through the countryside and eat duck in Provence, to see a show and eat Chinese in London, and, and, and...
5. Because after years of mediocrity as a terminal intermediate, I might finally become a decent skier (and learn to make fondue).
6. Because I stayed in the US during my junior year of college. I guess I sort of wondered what I might have missed.
7. Because it was different, because no one else was packing up and moving to Europe.
8. Because there was no way I was ready to settle down or settle.
9. For the adventure, for the challenge...
10. For the fun of it all.

Bon appétit and enjoy!

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or just look like one!

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Lavender Infused White Chocolate Crème

I love the smell of lavender. When I returned to the US, a basket of dried lavender was packed away into one of my many boxes. It took awhile to find it but as soon as I opened the box and pulled out the basket, the room was filled with the scent of summer adventures in France. Bicycle trips, river rafting, hiking and wonderful dinners under the stars. It helped me feel at home again in my home country. Enjoy!

Serves 8

7 ounces good quality chocolate, chopped
2 cups heavy cream
2 tablespoons honey
2 tablespoons dried edible lavender flowers
6 large egg yolks
Pinch nutmeg
Pinch cloves
Pinch salt
1 tablespoon kirsch
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Fresh raspberries or strawberries for garnish

1. Put the chocolate into a medium bowl and set aside.
2. Bring the cream, honey and lavender to just a simmer in a heavy saucepan over low heat, stirring occasionally. Remove the pan from the heat and let steep for 30 minutes. Pour the cream through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl and discard the lavender.
3. Fill a large bowl about half full with ice and water. Set aside.
4. Whisk the yolks, spices and salt together in a heavy saucepan. (If you use the pan from step 2 wash it before using it again.) Whisking constantly, slowly pour the cream into the saucepan. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly until it registers 170 degrees on a thermometer.
5. Pour the custard through a fine-mesh sieve into the bowl with the chocolate. Let set for a few minutes; whisk to combine. Stir in the kirsch and vanilla. Set the bowl of custard into the large bowl of ice water. Stirring frequently, let stand until cool. Refrigerate until very cold, at least 6 hours.
6. Beat with an electric mixer on a high speed until the crème increases in volume by about 50%. Return to the refrigerator and chill for 2 hours. Spoon the crème into small dessert or wine glasses, garnish with fresh raspberries and serve.

