

Tuesday, April 2nd

Everything started heating up in America surrounding COVID-19 the week before our spring break. Nothing drastic had happened in Montana yet; flights supported by the university to China were cancelled and professors were told that they were allowed to switch to online classes if they wished, which many other colleges had already done at the time, but that was the first direct impact the virus had on our community. My roommates and I had planned a road trip for spring break. We just wanted some sun on our skin, which ended up completely changing our original plan because it was supposed to snow and/or rain everywhere we wanted to go. Deciding to leave was a big deal, but we had all been looking forward to it for so long and figured that since we were planning to camp the whole time, it would be alright so we adjusted our original plan and headed towards the sun. We ended up spending the week camping outside of Lake Havasu in Arizona and then migrating to Death Valley when the bad weather headed our way. Our only interactions with civilization this whole trip were when we went to gas stations and to the Walmart to get supplies and refill our water. We were out of cell service nearly the entire trip so none of us were receiving direct updates about anything happening in the world beyond, but we were all realizing that things were getting stranger and stranger the further into the week we got. The night we left, we went to the gas station (the only one for miles so we had been frequenting it over the last couple days) to refill our water bottles and grab road snacks. In the gas station, all of the employees were extremely on edge. They had closed the bathroom, they shut down their deli, they only let 3 people in the store at a time, and one employee practically threw a tantrum at one of us for trying to refill their water bottle without using one of their cups to fill first then dump into our bottles.

We ended up in Salt Lake around 9pm that night, only stopping for gas, noticing how more employees were wearing gloves along with other increased sanitation practices along the way. When we arrived in the city we stopped only to get dinner before completing the last 6 hours of our drive. Everything was closed, food places were drive thru or pick up only, everyone (including our hangry group) was on edge, it was very creepy-and our first taste of what we were getting back to.

Upon getting to Bozeman, we all entered a quarantine that has only gotten more intense as time has passed-we now only leave our house to go to the grocery store (or to take a walk). My house is located near the Town and Country by campus-close enough to walk to when it's not snowing or below freezing. Over the years I've come to really love and appreciate this grocery store, we're quite lucky to have a place that supports such local and fresh products, but recently I absolutely dread going there. It's so eerie-nearly everyone is wearing masks, everyone either stops in their tracks or freaks out at you if you're standing too near to anyone... so I've stopped going unless I absolutely have to. When I do go, I usually go with a couple of my roommates and we try to get everything that we need for ourselves and the ones that didn't come along (conquer and divide kind of thing).

Since we're all home all the time, we've been making a lot of meals together. If not all of us then a couple will combine what we have. That part has been really enjoyable. I've become way too aware of everyone's diets, and that one of my roommates is possibly one of the worst cooks I've met (which you'd think I'd have noticed by now considering we've lived together for two years...)

Although we're still on fairly tight budgets (especially those of us that pay our own rent and have had to file for unemployment) we've all been eating really healthy. And since we're all sharing, we've all become vegetarian by accident so that it's easier to combine ingredients and share meals. Despite the fear of going to the grocery store and the teeth-clenching experience of being there, I feel lucky to live in a household that has been maintaining healthy eating habits-probably healthier than any of us have had since we've moved in together-which has thus far been an awesome experience.

One of my roommates just made a mushroom bake thing topped with crispy cheese and tomato sauce-something I never knew she could make that turned out to be extremely tasty.

Sunday, April 5

This morning was wonderful; my roommate and her boyfriend got a vegan cookbook for Christmas that they finally whipped out and they cooked all of us these daaaank vegan pancakes. I don't think I've had a pancake since high school, it was a really lovely yet nostalgic breakfast.

They say that these next two weeks are projected to be the worst, so I went to the grocery store to stalk up so I wouldn't even need to go there during this time. Turns out my roommates all did the same, just at different times. I don't think I've ever seen our fridge so full.

We all wore gloves when we went but I think only a couple of us wore masks. When I went I didn't use a mask because the one I brought kept falling and I thought it'd be better to just not wear it than to touch my face. Everyone who I saw was wearing a mask and gloves, but I noticed way too many people my age not doing either. It was very stressful trying to run around and grab everything and avoid people, and I noticed myself judging those that weren't taking extra precautions which was interesting.

Tuesday, April 7

I've eaten a bagel every meal today.

Wednesday, April 8

We ordered thai food last night since we were deep in a movie marathon, the first time I've ordered food in at least a month. It was really delicious but it tore our bodies apart the next day which was really funny. I'm wondering if it's just because we've been eating the same things so often that our bodies forgot how to process richer food?

Thursday, April 9

It was super nice out this morning so we made waffles and had a group breakfast in the backyard.

For dinner my vegan roommate and I made sriracha cauliflower with rice noodles and some stir fry vegetables, highly recommended. I'm looking forward to making it again sometime.

Sunday, April 12

Yesterday was Easter. A couple of my roommates grew up celebrating this holiday so we made some pancakes and grapefruit juice mimosas for breakfast to start off the day. One of our roommates left to go home the other day and the 2 with boyfriends did fancy dinner stuff together so my other roommate and I went to Taco Bell for dinner to treat ourselves.

I've been really freaked out to leave the house or our backyard pretty much at all but I had been craving fast food for a long time so we hopped in the car and drove over. Obviously we went through the drive thru and I was honestly impressed by the measures that T Bell had taken. They were wearing gloves, the card reader could go out the window so they wouldn't have to touch it, everything (the receipt and food etc) was put on trays so that nothing was passed between hands. The whole interaction was very fast and the first one I've had in about two weeks now that didn't stress me out. I also tried a new burrito-the 7-layer which is vegetarian and a new fave for sure.

Monday, April 13

One of my roommates set up our projector in their room (as we don't have a tv, it's more convenient to leave that giant screen set up in her room rather than in the middle of the living room which blocks the only access to the kitchen) so we've all been piling in there to watch movies after doing homework all day since it's been quite cold and a little snowy. We were all craving ice cream so hard and after downloading 3 new apps and placing 5 orders amongst these, we discovered that there was nothing available in town and that my phone still thinks I live in Colorado... Needless to say we were all very disappointed.

I'm waiting to buy groceries until I run out of coffee, I can live off of pb&j's as long as I need, but I cannot live without coffee. Whenever that time comes, ice cream is now the next most important thing on my list (probably along with peanut butter, bread, and jelly...).

Wednesday, April 15

It's pretty snowy outside today and since the semester is coming to an end, we've all been really busy with school. For lunch, everyone left in the house made soup and grilled cheese for lunch (each on separate occasions without knowing about anyone else also making this, which I found quite amusing).

One of my roommates went to the store to get ingredients to make this cool mediterranean dish that we had seen one of our friends make on Instagram but she said she got

so overwhelmed at the store, I don't think she even got the other groceries that she truly needed to get. Very spooky.

Saturday, April 18

A lot of our friends have gotten really into baking which has been fun to watch on Instagram. I've been seeing people make homemade bagels, pizza dough, sourdough bread, scones, and so much banana bread it's insane. Yesterday one of our friends accidentally made a batch of pizza dough that turned out to be like 8 pizzas worth so she drove to a couple of her friends' houses and left some dough in their mailboxes as a surprise-my house was lucky enough to receive one. One of my roommates and I decided to make a Thai Pie with it, so we had to go to the grocery store...

We ended up going to the Safeway rather than the TnC by our house. It was easier since that store is much larger, I felt less stressed about trying to keep a safe distance between everyone there. I was also very impressed with their cart sterilization; one entrance was exclusively an exit, they would keep all the unsterilized carts in there and then once cleaned they would be moved to the other entrance (where there were signs that said that the carts had been sterilized). Also, all of the employees were wearing gloves and masks which was strangely comforting...I can't wait to go to the grocery store with ease, to be able to pop in for a second just to grab a couple things at a time. I feel bad being in the grocery store if I'm not there to stock up on everything.

Anyways, a Thai Pie is a pizza that uses peanut sauce instead of marinara and has bell peppers, broccoli, mandarin oranges, mozzarella, and peanuts on top. It was so delicious, and I hate to say it but the leftovers the next day may have been even better. I was really impressed by the dough our friend had made-it cooked perfectly in about 6 minutes.

All of the dough she gave out came with a sweet little note that included cooking instructions, and a request to post the results on our Instagram stories. Since then, I've seen a spider web of our friends in other places also making homemade pizza and dough which has been a lot of fun to see. I grew up as technology as we now know it has been introduced into our lives; got my first smart phone halfway through high school, grew up with a dinosaur of a tv and a family computer, and was in middle school/high school during the birth of social media like Snapchat and Instagram. I've never been a big user of these types of things, mostly just to see what my friends in other states are up to type of thing, but during this pandemic I have become really grateful for social media. I still feel connected to my friends and families and reassured to see that everyone is in the same boat. It's really sweet to see all the ways people still celebrate their 21st birthdays, to see high school students try on their prom fits even though they can't go, to see people in cities on their balconies making music or sharing a drink from afar, along with all the family group facetimes everywhere, and of course all of the hobbies like bread baking and all of the new music people are sharing with each other...it's definitely made this quarantine feel less like isolation.

Tuesday, April 21

Went to the grocery yesterday, spent way too much money on accident but it turned out to be super worth it-all my roommates and I made pizzas last night. One of them had gone to Italy a while back and was craving this pizza she had there so we tried to mimic a margarita pizza with a balsamic drizzle (delish). We also made a ton of popcorn that night, a sweet one with cinnamon sugar and a savory one with dill and salt on it.

Wednesday, April 22

Today I spoke with my boss. I work at a cafe downtown and he has been sending out emails discussing whether or not to reopen including questions regarding whether or not everyone would feel safe coming back and what extra measures should be taken to insure social distancing measures etc. I spoke with him today to figure some things out and we ended up talking for the better part of an hour. I thought it would be interesting to add to this food journal because we were discussing aspects of the food industry and hardships concerning small businesses at this time. We discussed some loans that are available to small businesses and discussed how grocery stores have been functioning in terms of the chain from producers to packaging to distributing. He told me that it's very likely that at least 50% or more of small businesses may not make it through this pandemic. We talked about the dynamics of the unemployment offices right now; how their top priority is trying to keep people safe and how that plays into whether or not people are able to get that money even if the business they work for is open but if they're unable to interact with people in that way again etc.

Additionally, he brought up something he read in the news. This particular article was explaining a pork product factory in South Dakota. The people living in this area were not taking the necessary precautions, such as sanitation procedures, distancing, quarantining and all of that. They thought that since they lived in such a rural and unpopulated area, they would be able to function normally. All of a sudden, over a hundred of their employees had contracted COVID-19 and they had to shut down the whole plant. From there the article was describing how this affected those it distributed to, which amounts to 5% of grocery stores and businesses in the whole nation (so not a small ripple). We discussed how this scenario seemed to be a common theme in more rural areas. That they thought they would be ok because they're not as populated as the areas which got hit the hardest, and how this lack of precaution blew up in their face. It just goes to show how connected everything is. No one person or business can only look out for themselves or think they are ok, they'd just be completely missing the big picture.

Friday, April 24

Today one of my roommates went to just about every grocery store in town looking for ingredients to make bagels and absolutely everywhere is out of yeast. She started looking online and everything, and there was simply none in town. That night, one of our friends dropped off a loaf of homemade sourdough and she almost flipped out asking them about their yeast. For fun, I

googled “why is there no yeast” and found a plethora of articles which told me that this was happening across America, and it is because people were told to purchase enough food for 2 weeks in order to limit trips to the grocery store. People are continuing to stockpile on yeast and it doesn’t seem like there will be enough of it any time soon. Additionally, I learned why sourdough has become so popular. Since a sourdough starter only requires water and flour and ferments from the natural yeast in the flour combined with the air in your house, it is a cheap, simple, and delicious bread baking alternative.

Saturday, April 25

Today was especially strange. The longer the quarantine goes on, and the less reliance there is in the future has really been getting to my roommates and I-especially since we haven’t interacted with anyone else other than each other and the boyfriends that pop in time to time (I think everyone is starting to get a little stir-crazy). Since it is technically still a weekend, one of my roommates and I wanted to do something special and out of the ordinary. This is with my vegan roommate who is trying to incorporate fish into her diet (a really good decision, I think she really needs these nutrients). Sushi has been one of my favorite foods for quite some time, and I have been craving it for months since I hadn’t had it since the last time I was in Colorado with my family. I thought sushi would be a fun way for her to try out fish again for her first time in about seven years, so we ordered some from seven sushi to support a local business, and even ordered a bottle of sake to make it extra special. We tried the sake both hot and cold which was really fun, neither of us had ever done that before and we couldn’t decide which way we preferred. Also, she loved all of the rolls she got and is already talking about other ways to eat fish (like in tacos and such) which is super awesome to see-I’m excited on behalf of the vitamins her body needs. (I even got her to eat a bite of ice cream for dessert which is always an evil reward for me since she’s been a super strict vegan as long as I’ve known her and I’ve only ever witnessed her cheat once before).

Tuesday, April 28

We read the Governor’s new order today covering his plan for a phase reopening of Montana. It’s cool that the stay at home order worked so well that we can be one of the first states to start reopening, but it’s nerve wracking because there’s still no vaccine so it’s hard to say how long we’ll be open for, or how long it will be until things can fully go back to normal. It’s strange that quarantine has become the new normal. As fun as it is to think about being able to go out and get drinks and ice cream and coffee and to go back to work and hangout with people again...it almost seems like another universe. Like that version of life was a dream or something. Not that the quarantine has been the best time ever, but everyone has adjusted to it pretty well. My roommates and I were talking about how going back out into the world makes us nervous. Definitely because the fear of the virus is still out there, but also because it’s just been so long since any of that has happened.

The semester is coming to an end. Usually we would all be in the library for about 12 hours a day, studying and finishing up our final assignments. We almost miss how stressed out everyone would get. It's sad that the end of school and the beginning of summer (usually the best part of the whole year) isn't marked by the usual transitions. I'm glad none of us are graduating this semester, I feel terrible for everyone everywhere who has been looking forward to this day for so long but there's nothing special about it anymore. Just like every other day, but now you've got a degree. It really is like you just purchased the most expensive piece of paper ever...

My roommates and I are all done on the same day of finals week. We're all hoping that the weather will be nice, but this time of year it's so back and forth that it's really hard to say how it will be. But regardless, we're going to try and celebrate and I'm really hoping that those who can are able to do something as well (maybe drink some champagne and grill something delicious)

Thursday, April 30

Last night we finished up the rest of our leftover Thai Pie ingredients from last time (mainly the peanut sauce and mandarin oranges). We made the best one I've ever had, shaped it like a heart. Sticking with this lil love theme we also made mexican chocolate covered strawberries (as in strawberries dipped in chocolate that we flavored with cayenne, cinnamon, and some salt). I keep thinking about how this journal is supposed to include everything food related but I simply can't look at the news anymore, not seeing the daunting headlines and reading all of the fucked up stories is one of the only things still keeping my sane. So, if you've made it this far, I'm sorry that this wasn't anything more than a peek into a little house full of college girls that probably care about each other way too much, and do stupid things like make heart shaped pizzas for dinner.