

DAISY'S MARKET

ROMANTICIZE THE MUNDANE

FEBRUARY 2026



Written by Mema Keco

ROMANTICIZE THE MUNDANE

During the winter season, there can be a tendency to feel moments of sadness, low energy, and not wanting to leave your cozy home. I feel this way quite a bit during February as the weather in Iowa is miserable and emotionally, a hard month for me.

I've heard the word, "romanticize" many times in the past year, and how people are trying to shift the perspective of something boring into a beautiful moment. I love the idea of finding the joy in something so small or simple, because it has helped me feel more grateful and appreciative of my life.

Throughout this edition, I want to share how we can take a few mundane moments from our lives and romanticize the beauty in each one.

CONTENTS

02 ROMANTICIZE THE MUNDANE

Finding the joy in small and simple moments.

04 MEDITERRANEAN PASTA SALAD

Filling, fresh, and great to meal prep.

06 HOMEMADE COFFEE SYRUPS

Three simple coffee syrups for your lattes.

08 INSIGHTFUL BOOKS & ROM-COMS

Enjoy the beautiful moments in life.

10 VISIT YOUR LOCAL ART MUSEUM

See & learn about all the beautiful art there is.

12 SEND A SNAIL MAIL

Send a letter to your best friend.

14 SEWING PROJECT: BOOK SLEEVE

Protect your books with a cute book sleeve.

18 FEBRUARY BUCKET LIST

Fill your month with joyful moments.



MEDITERRANEAN PASTA SALAD

During the winter season, I definitely lack energy after work, and the last thing I want to do is cook a meal or clean dishes. I meal prep on Sundays to help combat this and one of my favorite meals to make is a mediterranean pasta salad. It's filling, fresh, and if you don't have a specific ingredient, you can easily substitute or omit it altogether. The recipe is a great base to enjoy on its own or experiment with different vegetables, dressings, or meats as well.

MEDITERRANEAN PASTA SALAD (VEGETARIAN)

Makes ~4 Servings | Time: ~1 Hour

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 Cups of Pasta
 - *I've used farfalle, rotini, cavatelli, orecchiette, and orzo.*
- 2 Cans of Chickpeas (rinsed)
- 3-4 Persian Cucumbers
- 2 Cups of Cherry Tomatoes
- 2 Bell Peppers
- 1 Red Onion or 2 Shallots
- 2 Cups (16 oz) of Feta Cheese
- ½ Cup (4 oz) of Sliced Black Olives (or any olives you like)
- 1 Cup of Parsley or Arugula or Spinach

FOR DRESSING:

- ½ Cup of Olive Oil
- ½ Cup of White Wine Vinegar
- 1 Teaspoon of Balsamic Vinegar
- 1 Tablespoon of Dijon Mustard
- 2-4 Cloves of Garlic
- 1 Tablespoon of Dill
- 1 Tablespoon of Mint
- 1 Tablespoon of Basil
- Salt & Pepper to Taste
- Juice of 1 Lemon

FOR SEASONING:

- Drizzle of Olive Oil
- ½ Tablespoon Paprika
- ½ Tablespoon of Ground Cumin
- ½ Teaspoon of Garlic Powder
- Salt & Pepper to Taste

TOOLS:

- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| • Large Bowl | • Parchment Paper | • Garlic Press or Grater |
| • Stirring Utensil | • Strainer/Colander | • Measuring Cup |
| • Knife | • Pot | • Whisk |
| • Sheet Tray | • Tongs | |

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Rinse and drain the chickpeas using the strainer/colander and toss onto a sheet tray with parchment paper.
3. Drizzle olive oil onto the chickpeas along with the seasoning mix, (*paprika, ground cumin, garlic powder, salt, and pepper*) and toss well.
4. Place in the oven for about 20 minutes, tossing the chickpeas halfway through.
5. While the chickpeas are in the oven, place a pot of water onto the stove on high heat. Salt the water well.
6. When the water has come to a boil, toss in your pasta shape of choice. Cook until al dente.
7. While waiting, rinse and chop all the vegetables into bite sized pieces and toss into a large bowl.
 - a. *Cucumbers, Cherry Tomatoes, Bell Peppers, and Red Onion or Shallots.*
8. Also toss in the feta cheese, olives of your choice, and your green (*parsley, spinach, arugula*).
9. Once the chickpeas and pasta are done cooking, strain the pasta and set both aside to cool before tossing into the large bowl.
10. In a large measuring cup, pour in the *olive oil, white wine vinegar, balsamic vinegar, dijon mustard, and the juice of 1 lemon.*
11. If using fresh herbs, chop up the dill, mint, and basil finely and toss in the measuring cup.
12. Using a garlic press or grater, grate the garlic in the cup as well. Salt and pepper to taste.
13. Once the chickpeas and pasta have cooled completely, toss them into the large bowl and mix well. Slowly start adding the dressing to the bowl to coat everything well.
14. Serve right away or place into meal prep containers and enjoy!



Try with quick pickled red onions.



Substitute feta with mozzarella.



Replace the chickpeas with chicken.

HOMEMADE COFFEE SYRUPS



I love to romanticize my morning routine, and one way I do that is by making a delicious latte with a fun flavor. I have been enjoying making my own coffee syrups because they don't require too many ingredients and are a lot easier than one may think. I chose three flavors that I personally enjoy, but the best part about making your own syrups is allowing yourself to be creative with the flavors.

BANANA BREAD SYRUP

Makes: 2 Cups | Time: ~20 Minutes

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Cup Water
- 1 Overripe Banana
- ¾ Cup Brown Sugar
- ¼ Cup Granulated Sugar
- ¼ Cup Maple Syrup
- ½ Teaspoon Cinnamon
- ¼ Teaspoon Nutmeg
- 1 Teaspoon Vanilla
- Pinch of Salt

TOOLS:

- Saucepan
- Strainer
- Measuring Cups & Spoons
- Storage Container
- Blender *(optional)*

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Place all the ingredients *(except the vanilla)* into your saucepan on medium-high heat.
2. Once it starts to simmer, turn the heat down to medium and let it simmer for about 5 minutes.
 - a. *Stir occasionally to prevent sticking on the bottom.*
3. Start to mash the bananas into the syrup and simmer for another 5 minutes.
4. Take off the heat and pour your vanilla in.
5. Strain the mixture into your storage container or blend the mixture and then strain.
 - a. *If blending, wait until the mixture has cooled down!*
6. Keep in the fridge and enjoy for a few days as bananas don't last too long.



CLASSIC CARAMEL SAUCE

Makes ~2 Cups | Time: ~30 Minutes

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Cup of Granulated Sugar
- ¼ Cup of Water
- 6 Tablespoons of Unsalted Butter
- ½ Cup Heavy Cream
- 1 Teaspoon of Vanilla
- Pinch of Salt

TOOLS:

- Saucepan
- Strainer
- Measuring Cups & Spoons
- Storage Container

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Add the sugar and water in your saucepan over medium heat. Let the mixture bubble *without stirring*.
 - a. *The mixture will eventually turn a golden/amber color which can take about 10-15 minutes.*
2. Remove from the heat once it reaches the golden/amber color (*it will continue to cook*), and add in the butter and whisk quickly.
3. Slowly pour the heavy cream in and whisk at the same time.
4. Add in the vanilla and salt once everything is mixed well.
5. Keep in the fridge and enjoy!



STRAWBERRY SYRUP

Makes ~1.5 Cups | Time: ~20 Minutes

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Cup Water
- ½ Cup Sugar
- 1 Cup Frozen or Fresh Strawberries
- 1 Teaspoon Vanilla or Honey
- Pinch of Salt

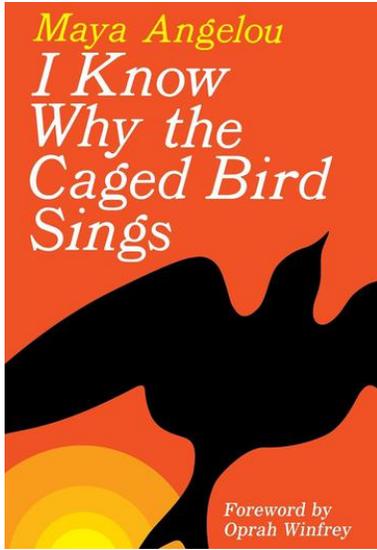
TOOLS:

- Saucepan
- Strainer
- Measuring Cups & Spoons
- Storage Container
- Blender (*optional*)

INSTRUCTIONS:

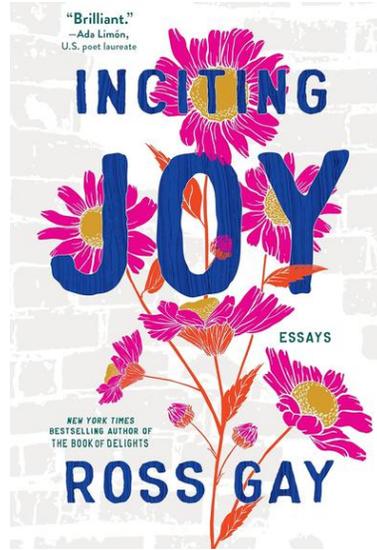
1. Add in all the ingredients (*except the vanilla or honey*) into your saucepan on medium-high heat.
2. Once it starts to simmer, turn the heat down to medium and let it simmer for about 5 minutes.
 - a. *Stir occasionally to prevent sticking on the bottom.*
3. Start to mash the strawberries into the syrup and simmer for another 5 minutes.
4. Take off the heat and pour your vanilla in.
5. Strain the mixture into your storage container or blend the mixture and then strain.
 - a. *If blending, wait until the mixture has cooled down!*
6. Keep in the fridge and enjoy!





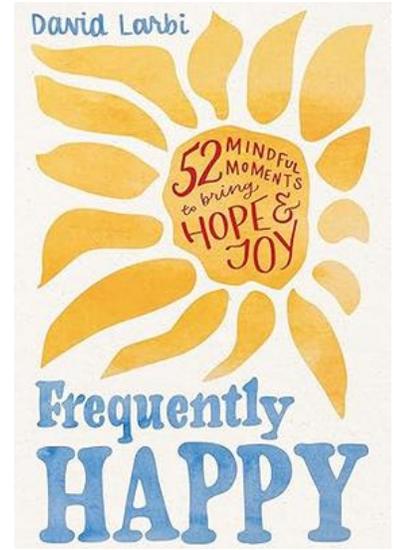
I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS

By: Maya Angelou



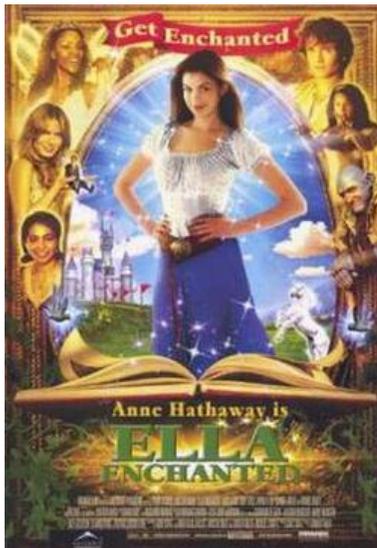
INCITING JOY

By: Ross Gay



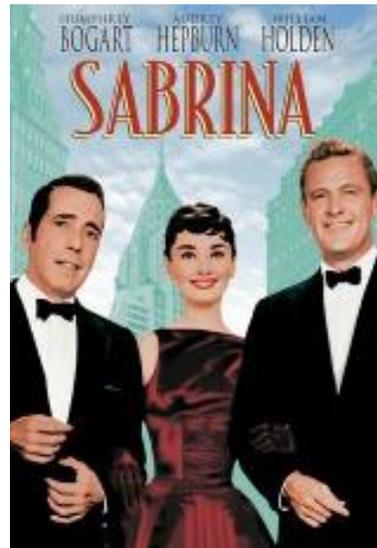
FREQUENTLY HAPPY

By: David Larbi



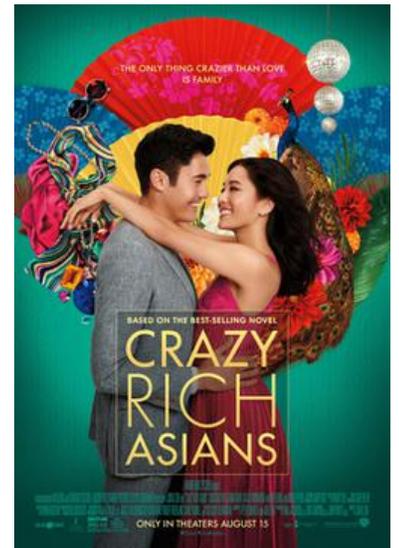
ELLA ENCHANTED

Directed by: Tommy O'Haver



SABRINA

Directed by: Billy Wilder



CRAZY RICH ASIANS

Directed by: Jon M. Chu

INSIGHTFUL BOOKS & ROM-COMS

ENJOY THE BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS IN LIFE

Finding the joy in the mundane can be difficult and sometimes, almost impossible. I love reading for this reason because it helps me find new perspectives and think differently about moments of my life.

I chose three books that I have found truly eye-opening, insightful, and written by beautiful people.

ROMANTIC COMEDIES

I know, romantic comedies during February, groundbreaking. However, I do love the immense feeling of love surrounding February and most of that does come from watching romantic comedies or any other love story.

I chose three movies that make me feel all the feels, but with a chuckle or two.

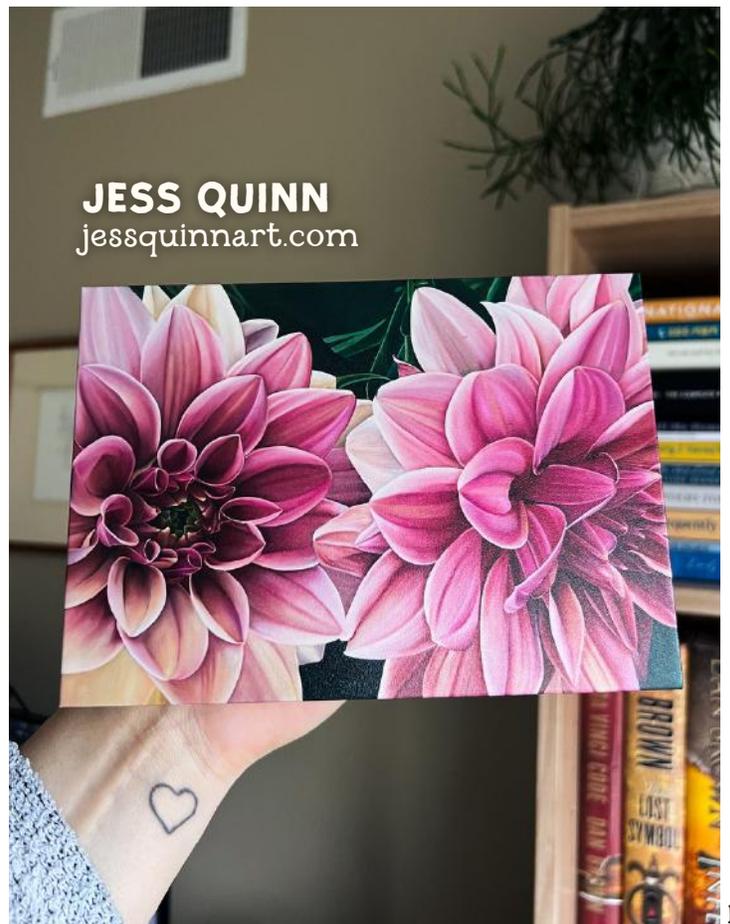
VISIT YOUR LOCAL ART STUDIO OR MUSUEM

During February, the average temperature in Iowa ranges from 20-30 degrees fahrenheit, which means, I don't like being outside for too long. With that, I try to make it a point to be a tourist in my own town of Des Moines, Iowa and find places or activities to do for when the weather outside is unbearable. I love visiting art studios and museums because first, it's an inside activity, but also I get to see and be inspired by all the beautiful artwork and sculptures. If you have a nearby art studio or any musuem near you, take a day to walk through and romanticize the moment.

I recently visited Mainframe Studios in Downtown Des Moines, Iowa which is the nation's largest nonprofit building for creative workspaces. It was absolutely beautiful and such a unique place.



A FEW OF MY FAVORITES





SEND A SNAIL MAIL

My long-distance best friend, Hannah and I started sending “snail mail” to each other as a way to connect in a way other than texting. I’ve been loving creating the little snail mail “packets” with tiny stickers, random scraps of paper, and of course, a handwritten letter or two that we both use to create junk journal spreads. However, even sending a nice handwritten letter or card to someone you care about is a beautiful way to say “I love you”. If you have time this month, consider sending a letter or two to your family, friends, or even a coworker telling them you appreciate them.

WHAT TO SEND:

A handwritten card or postcard



Stickers or a sticker sheet



A photo or two



Magazine or book clippings



A page from your notepad



Scrap paper or gift wrapping



Old stamps



Coloring page



Decorate the envelope too



SEWING PROJECT: BOOK SLEEVE

I love reading physical books, so I always have a book sleeve with me whenever I'm traveling to protect it. I love sewing book sleeves because they are a great beginner project and are extremely useful for not just books, but for notebooks, journals, e-readers, and more.



BOOK SLEEVE WITH POCKET

Level: Beginner | Time: ~1 Hour

TOOLS & MATERIALS

- Ruler
- Scissors and/or Rotary Cutter
- Marking Utensil
(Hera Marker, Chalk, Pencil)
- Pins and/or Clips
- Fabric (*Outer, Lining, & Ties*)
- Interfacing or Batting
- Thread
- Walking Foot & Guide Bar
- Iron & Ironing Board

OPTIONAL

- Basting/Safety Pins
- Bias Tape or Lace
- Label

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Gather all the materials and cut out the following:



MAIN BODY

TWO (2) 9X12 INCHES OF EACH

Outer Fabric
Interfacing/Batting
Lining Fabric



POCKET

ONE (1) 9X10 INCHES OF EACH

Outer Fabric
Interfacing/Batting
Lining Fabric



TIES

TWO (2) 4X18 INCHES OF

Tie Fabric

This book sleeve size will fit most paperbacks and some large hardcovers, but feel free to adjust the sizing as needed. The steps following will stay the same.



2. Place all your outer fabric pieces on top of all your interfacing or batting and iron.

a. I used iron-on interfacing, but if not available, use basting/safety pins to hold in place.



3. Using a hera marker, chalk, or pencil, mark your quilting lines with a ruler.

c. I did one (1) inch width lines as shown, but have also down diagonal lines too.



4. Using the walking foot attachment on your sewing machine, stitch on the lines to sew your outer fabric and interfacing/batting together.

5. Repeat with all outer fabrics.
d. I like to extend my stitch length when quilting.



6. For the POCKET, place the lining on top of the quilted outer fabric, good side to good side.

7. Clip or pin the top of the pocket.

8. Sew a straight stitch to secure.



9. Once stitched, flip the lining behind the outer fabric and interfacing and iron flat.

10. Sew a top stitch for a clean finish.



11. This is optional, but this is where you can place a label or patch on the pocket piece and stitch.



- 12. Fold the two ties in half (long-way) and iron flat.
- 13. Clip in place and sew a straight stitch all the way, closing one of the sides into a "triangle" shape.



- 14. Turn the ties inside out, iron flat, and feel free to top stitch around the 3 stitched sides.
 - a. *If you don't want to make ties, feel free to use bias tape or lace!*



- 15. Attach the pocket piece on top of one of the main body pieces. Clip to hold in place.



- 16. Place the other main body piece, face down, good side to good side, on the other main body piece. Attach using the clips already in place.



- 17. Sew around the 3 sides, leaving the top open. Trim up any excess fabric and threads.



- 18. Place the lining fabric on top of the other lining fabric, good side to good side. Sew around the 3 sides, leaving a 3-4 inch opening at the bottom.



- 19. Turn the lining inside out and place inside the main body, good side to good side.



- 20. Place one of the ties, with the finished end inside the sleeve.
- 21. Make sure it's in the middle and in-between a main fabric and a lining fabric.



- 22. Repeat on the other side and clip in place.



23. Sew around the top of the book sleeve while securing the ties in place.

a. I removed the storage piece from my sewing machine for easier handling.



24. Turn the book sleeve inside out using that opening you had left in the lining.



25. This is what it should look like once you turn everything inside out.



26. Iron the lining gap closed and clip in place.

27. Sew to close the gap.



28. Iron the book sleeve flat and sew a top stitch on the top of the book sleeve.

a. This helps keep the lining fabric on the inside.

b. Be aware of where your ties are located to not sew them somewhere random.



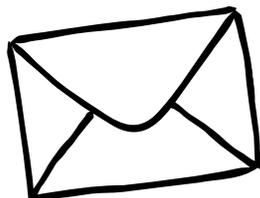
29. Iron again if needed and enjoy!

FEBRUARY BUCKET LIST

February may be the shortest month of the year, but that doesn't mean it can't be filled with plenty of joyful moments. Below is a bucket list of activities to do in February to help romanticize your life.



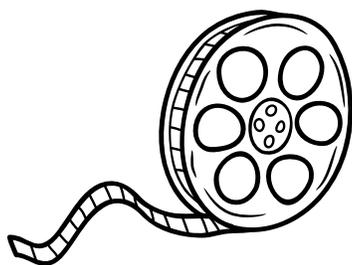
Go to your favorite coffee shop and journal for an hour or two.



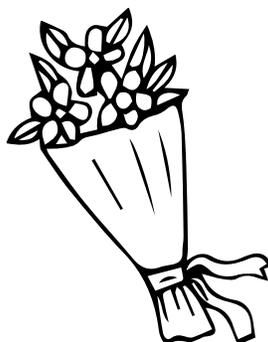
Send a letter in the mail to a dear friend.



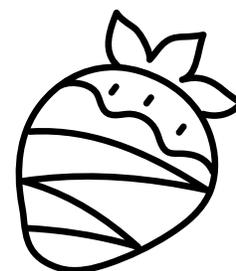
Spend a night pampering yourself with a spa night.



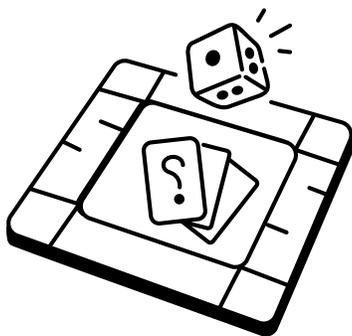
Watch a new (or your favorite) romantic comedy with a fun drink.



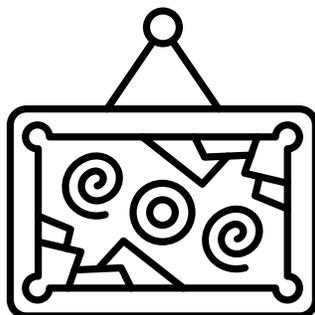
Treat yourself to fresh flowers and create a flower bouquet.



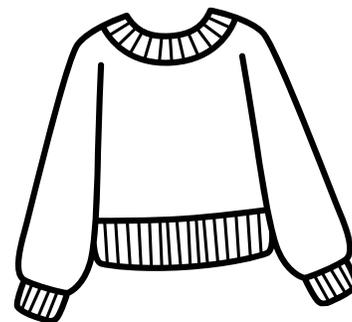
Dip strawberries in chocolate for a quick and easy treat.



Invite a few friends over for board game night.



Visit your local art museum and bring a sketchbook to draw.



Wear your favorite sweater on a cold and windy day.

JOURNAL SPREAD IDEA

Print this page and color the images once you complete them!



Thank you for taking the time to read Daisy's Market: Romanticize the Mundane. I had a wonderful time writing and creating this magazine, and I hope you take some time to see the beauty all around you this month.

Thank you,
Mema Keco



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ROMANTICIZE THE MUNDANE

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