Megan Porta:

Welcome to eat blog talk where food bloggers come to get their fill of the latest tips, tricks, and insights into the world of food blogging. If you feel that hunger for information will provide you with the tools you need to add value to your blog. And we'll also ensure you're taking care of yourself because food blogging is a demanding job. Now, please welcome your host, Megan Porta. Food Bloggers. Hey, if you have not yet joined the new, amazing community that we just launched, go and do it. You will find so much value inside, including connecting with other food bloggers in a much deeper way, and having access to all kinds of exclusive value, such as bonus podcast episodes and mastermind groups and our resources and service provider directory, and so much more. If you sign up by the end of August, you can be a part of the first batch of mastermind groups that we're setting up. So this is not something that you will want to put off. Go to Eatblogtalk.com for more information, and we can't wait to see you inside.

Megan Porta:

Okay food bloggers, have you heard of Flo Desk, the new big email marketing rage? This is an amazing new option for managing your email subscriber list. It is super easy to use and it comes with gorgeous, intuitive drag and drop templates. And Flo Desk does not charge based on number of subscribers. So your monthly rate will stay the same from month to month. Everyone pays $38 a month or use my affiliate link to get 50% off and pay only $19 a month. You guys, this is a fraction of the price of other email service providers, and you'll be blown away by the beautiful and intuitive templates waiting for you inside. Visit Eatblogtalk.com/resources to grab your link. Flo desk - the stunning new option for email marketing. Hey, food bloggers. Welcome to eat blog talk. This podcast is made for you. Food bloggers, wanting value, information and clarity that will help you find greater success in your business.

Megan Porta:

Today. I am so excited to have a conversation with Alexandria Drzazgowski, from Foreignfork.com and we are going to chat about how to avoid cultural appropriation as a food blogger. Alexandria is the food blogger behind Foreign Fork, a food blog on which she is cooking one meal from every country in the world. After graduating from college Alexandria backpacked for six months, eating and cooking everywhere she went. When she came home, she wanted to continue the adventure. So she started her food blog. For two years now, Alexandria has been cooking the world in alphabetical order, traveling to each country from her kitchen. Also worth mentioning, Alexandria in 2019, won a Savour Blog Award for most groundbreaking voice, which is so amazing Alexandria. So nice work on that.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Thank you.

Megan Porta:

Yeah. And I am just super excited to chat with you today about this because as we talked about before the interview started, this is just a really relevant topic and your experience with backpacking for six months and eating and cooking and doing all of those fun things around the world, and then taking that home to your blog is so cool. I love that. But before we dive into this, give us a quick fun fact about yourself.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Um, thank you for that kind introduction. I just want to tell you I'm so excited to be on the podcast I've been listening for about, I mean, I think I discovered your podcast about a year ago, but I've listened to all the episodes at this point. Um, I'm so excited to be talking to you.

Megan Porta:

Yay! Likewise.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Thank you. Um, okay. So my fun fact is, um, I really, really love to read. And so I've been working my way through a list of classic books for the last couple of years. There's 300 classic books on that list that I've been working my way through. So that is what I spend a lot of my free time doing.

Megan Porta:

Do you have a favorite or like a collection of favorites or like a time period that's a favorite?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Um, I think my favorite at the moment is Jane Eyre, which is kind of an unpopular opinion. Most people that I've heard, um, have a different opinion about that book than I do, but I think I really like it because I tried reading it once when I was a little bit younger and I had a hard time and I couldn't make it all the way through. And then I tried it again. And so it felt very triumphant to me to be able to finish that book. So I think that's why it's my favorite right now.

Megan Porta:

I love how, like you can read something or dive into something when you're younger and younger can mean even like twenties or, you know, teens, it just doesn't hit you in like a meaningful way. And then when you're older, you've had a few years of experience under your belt and it just is different. Right. You experience it in such a different way. So good for you for trying it again. Yeah, that's awesome. I love that. I love reading. I did all the classics, not all of them, but I did a lot of them in college because I was an English major.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Well, I started out as an English major too. I ended up switching majors, so I got a lot of headway that way too.

Megan Porta:

And I don't know, like I wasn't in the right space in college to necessarily absorb all of that. So any class, like I read now, I'm with you. I feel like it just has so much more meaning and depth and like, why didn't I see this back then?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Yeah. You actually have time to absorb now as opposed to just like reading because you have to,

Megan Porta:

And the desire to. Like you, you have the time and the desire to really understand it. I love that. And I also love that you backpacked for six months. Where in, okay. Where did you go? I just am curious, like, how did it start? Where did you start?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

So, um, when I backpacked, I had left the country a couple of times to go to the Caribbean or to go to Mexico, but I had never actually been overseas. And so I had always, always dreamed of doing a backpacking trip through Europe. So I started out in Italy and I lived in Italy in Rome for about three months. And so that was wonderful because I got a really good, um, you know, I got to experience it more than I did with some of the other countries I went to because I was just there for a really long time. So that was incredible and wonderful. And then after those three months were over, um, I backpacked for the next three months by myself. So I went to, yes, I went to, um, over the course of that whole time, I went to 15 different countries. Um, and I got like, I sat in and when you read my bio, I took cooking classes and every single country that I went to, I think it's such a beautiful way to learn about the history and the culture of a place. Like you can learn so much about a country through the food that the people eat there. And so I really loved that. It was so much fun.

Megan Porta:

Did you have a favorite place, food and otherwise?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Ooh, that's a good question. Um, okay. I really, obviously I loved Italy. I had a, really, my family is Italian too, so that's why I wanted to stay there for a longer, because, um, I wanted to experience, um, the roots of my family. So I have a very strong connection to Italy because of that. So I obviously obviously loved Italy. Um, but I also, in terms of food, I am obsessed with the food in France. I loved the food in France so much, there was not a single meal there that was not incredible. And even things that we eat here, um, like a quiche or something like that, I would eat it in France and it was just, Oh my God,

Megan Porta:

So much better.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Yes.

Megan Porta:

So Americanized version of food isn't necessarily better,

Alexandria Drazagowski:

You know, there's, there's, everything has its place, but the food there, I was like drooling over everything. It was so good.

Megan Porta:

Oh, I love hearing that. I love traveling. I love exploring and being adventurous. So you and I are kindred spirits in that way. Also. I know I've used the word love about 5 million times so far, but I also love what you're doing with your blog and how you brought that back over to your work here with this concept of cooking around the globe. I think this is so brilliant, but also a great way to tap into the deliciousness from all of these amazing parts of the world. So let's start our conversation by having you introduce your blog and how you are so familiar with cooking all over the world. We kind of talked about that, but why don't you tell us a little more?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Okay. Um, so my blog is called The Foreign Fork and I'm cooking one meal from every country in the world and I'm doing it alphabetically. So, um, every two weeks I'll start a new country and I'll start off that country by giving, um, an in depth view of the country. So I'll get fun facts and I'll give like an overview of the history. Um, I'll talk a little bit about the food culture and the flavors that are normally incorporated into the food in that country. Um, and I'll also just give any other relevant information that might not go into those specific categories. So I do a little background so that people reading at home can kind of know the country that, that we're going to be learning about. And then I'll do, depending on the country, um, two to five recipes from that country over the next two weeks. Um, and I try to do a main dish and an appetizer, and I always try to do a dessert because I love dessert. So I'll feature some food from that country. And then I'll also post on my Instagram fun facts about the country, so that, um, people that follow me on Instagram can stay involved as well there. So, um, it's definitely been a really fun way. I thought when I was first thinking of it, the reason that I decided to do it was because, um, I was going to be missing the adventure that I had had for six months. And I knew that I was going to come home and have to be a real life person and get a job. And so I wanted a a passion project to kind of continue to do that thing that I had loved so much while I was traveling. And so it's good because I think it's definitely a given, um, like people that love to travel. It's given them a way to experience culture from their home, whether they can afford to travel right now, whether they can't afford to travel right now, or now at the time we're speaking, everybody is not allowed to travel because of COVID. So it's also a good way to just experience the world in a different way and learn at home and stuff like that too. So,

Megan Porta:

And it's, yeah, like you said, it's a great time for it because people aren't necessarily traveling like they have been, or they wanted to in 2020. We want other ways to experience the world. So I think this is amazing and super timely. So it's really like a journey for you. Yes. But a journey for people, your audience to come along with you. I love that you start with taking facts about the country and kind of explaining what the country's about and what their food is. So it's not just like, okay, here's a dish, you know, that's from Italy or wherever. You're actually like diving into it slowly. So it's something that people really want to come alongside you and experience. So that is really cool. And you, you went and experienced all this stuff and you came back and you just brought it with you and decided this passion project was what you were going to do. So how did you know that this was going to be an important thing to do?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Okay. So, um, I guess I, at the time that I started my blog, I didn't know if it would be important to anybody other than myself. I just knew I was doing it cause I wanted a challenge and I wanted to experience the world. And I actually started my blog back in August of 2018. So we're almost like we're a week way from my two year anniversary. I love having my blog. Yeah. So, um, at the time I started it, it was just for me to, to kind of like cope with having to come back home. Um, but, um, it's definitely, obviously nobody wants COVID or quarantine or not being able to travel right now, but it has been, um, a good way to kind of like supplement that desire to travel too. So it kind of has, has worked out that it's been beneficial at this time, but I did not expect it, but it's been good.

Megan Porta:

I always come home from vacation and I'm like, so sad first, you know, like a week or two, I'm like, this is real life and I just want vacation again. So I love that you are just like, okay, I need a way to bring vacation with me home.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Post vacation blues are real. They are so real.

Megan Porta:

So my husband and I have a term, we call it PVD, post vacation depression. And every time we come home from a vacation, even if it's just like a weekend away, we just feel blue and, and we'll walk by each other in the hall and be like "PVD" and "like, yeah."

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Completely. I totally get it.

Megan Porta:

It is a real thing. I hate it. But anything you can do to relieve that pain of having to leave vacation. So this has to be a process for you. Obviously you said you were going like from A to Z, which is really cool, but this still has to be a process. You have to do like research and, you know, there has to be more involved than just like pulling up a few facts about a country and then making a dish. How do you go through this process?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Um, okay. So, when I'm actually starting to cook from a country, I definitely do a lot of research. Because first of all, um, when you have a food blog, your, your recipes need to be unique to you, right? So you can't just go online and cook a different recipe that you find online. So when you're making up your own recipe from a country that either you've never been to, or you've never cooked that country, um, it becomes a lot more difficult because you end up representing a group of people that maybe you don't have personal experience with. And so it's really important to be representing the culture of the country that you're cooking in an accurate light and making sure that you're doing it correctly. So I spend a lot of time doing research before I cook for my country. So I will start by, um, doing research on that recipe and that culture. So, like I said, when I'm writing those, um, introduction sections to each country, I'll look up a lot of the common ingredients and common cooking methods. I'll look up, um, a lot of the different tools that are used in that country to make the different recipes that I have on my brain to do. And then I will go through and I'll pick out a list of maybe like three to five ish, um, recipes that I can online or in books or something like that, about that recipe. So um, say I'm, I don't know, cooking a dish from Democratic Republic of the Congo. Cause that's what I'm on right now. Um, so I'll go online, I'll go online and I'll find, um, maybe three or four recipes for that dish. And I'll look at all of the ingredients that are used to like the common ingredients or the common threads between those recipes to figure out and make sure that I'm using the right ingredients. And then I'm doing the cooking methods in the right way. Um, and then I'll kind of take what I've learned and take the common threads there. Um, and I'll turn it into my own recipe. So I'll use different maybe, um, amounts, some ingredients or I'll cook it and maybe like, I'll follow the same instructions, but maybe I'll have a different cook time. And those kinds of things, I'll definitely edit it to make it my own recipe. Um, but I always want to make sure that I'm being true to the way that the people in that country make that recipe. And so that's why I'm, I always like double check and make sure that I'm doing it in a similar way. It's a little bit different when I'm making recipes that are just like coming out of my own brain out of my own kitchen. Like if I'm making a pasta recipe, then I just throw things together into what sounds good. But if I'm specifically making a recipe from a specific country, um, that's when I do like that double check to make sure that I'm getting everything generically in the right way.

Megan Porta:

So you want to make sure that you're staying true to the things that are really important to that recipe into that country. And you're putting another spin on it that maybe doesn't matter, like maybe a cooking method wouldn't be necessary to follow exactly. Do you have a common spin that you put on foods that you're creating, like Instant Pot or I don't know, like anything like that.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

That's actually funny that you said that because I do a lot of recipes in the Instant Pot. So it's funny that you use that as an example.

Megan Porta:

Ooh, interesting.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Yes. I love, I just got my Instant Pot. Um, like I think about a year ago at this point. Um, and so I've had a really fun time making certain recipes in the Instant Pot, like, for example, I just did, um, a couple of months ago I did Cuba. And so I did, um, Cuban Picadillo in the Instant Pot, um, which is normally a stovetop recipe, but it turns out delicious in the Instant Pot that it tastes the same, the ingredients are the same, but the cooking method is a little different. So, um, I love doing things in the Instant Pot, but, um, yeah, for the most part, if I'm not doing it in the Instapot, I try to stay pretty, um, like pretty in line with the normal cooking methods. But yeah.

Megan Porta:

I feel like the Instant Pot just recreates things so deliciously that you can really like simulate the same flavors and textures, but the cooking method just makes it, like that pressure cooking is just kind of magic on certain dishes.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

It's actual magic. I was so scared of my Instant Pot for a while and then, um, once I actually started learning how to use it, I was like, I'm never going back. This is so easy and like fast to use. So I'm obsessed with that.

Megan Porta:

It's daunting at first, all those buttons and you're like, well, is it really worth it? Like really digging into learning it, but once you do it, Oh, it's addicting. Everyone says too. So how long do you anticipate this taking you?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Um, okay, so I've been doing it for about a year. Um, I started off doing one country a week, but that got overwhelming. So now I do one country every two weeks. So I'm doing one country every two weeks with no breaks, no stops. Um, it'll take about eight years, but I sometimes will take some like a week off here and there. Like focused on something different for a week, like a holiday or something like that. And so, um, I think it'll probably take me closer to like nine or 10 years.

Megan Porta:

Wow.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

If I powered through it'd take 8 years.

Megan Porta:

Oh my goodness. This is inspiring because so many food bloggers get burnt out because they don't really have a direction. Like, let's say they're just doing generic comfort foods. And after a few years that can get a little bit old, but you have a direction and you've got an exact like map literally to guide you yes. To guide you through this process. And you even have a time frame in your mind. So I actually think this is kind of the way to go, just to have like a real solid plan. Like I am doing this and it's going to take me two weeks each and wow. I'm just inspired by this. So let's get back to your process. Do you ever like reach out to people who live in countries locally to ask them about food and how do you do that?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

I definitely do. So, um, I am in a lot of different Facebook groups. So I'm in travel Facebook groups, I'm in food blogging Facebook groups, um, I'm in Facebook groups for like different countries and things like that. And so when it comes time to actually, um, cook a country, I try as hard as I possibly can to find somebody from that country that can, um, is familiar with the food and can like look over what I've made. Now all the time, obviously like when you're cooking one meal from every country in the world, that sometimes it's not impossible to find, um, one person from every single country, but I do make that a really big effort for me. And so if I'm making a food, that's specifically meant to represent a culture, I will do my research. I'll do that method that we talked about earlier, looking at a couple of different recipes, picking out common threads, I'll make the recipe. Um, I'll take some photos of it. And then I will find somebody from that country that can look everything over and make sure that, um, everything looks good and authentic and like how their grandma would make it, you know? Um, so you can either have somebody look it over before you actually put it together or you can have somebody look it over after you've made it and you have photos and things. Um, but yeah, it's definitely, I've learned a lot that way through getting people's input of like, Oh yeah, this looks good. But like, did you know, we add, we normally add some wine to this or something like that. Um, I've definitely learned a lot from having people, um, look it over. So if you know somebody in person that can look it over somebody online, um, but either way I always try to have that double check.

Megan Porta:

What if you can't find somebody, has that ever happened?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Yeah, I definitely, yeah. There's definitely times where you can't find anybody and that's okay. For the most part when I can't find somebody I will still go through and I'll do that, that method that we talked about before. And then I'll also, um, watch some videos on YouTube too, to make sure that I'm like getting it pretty correct. Um, I'll, I'm pretty confident at that point. Like if I've done all of that research, I've looked at a couple of different, um, a couple of different recipes. I'm pretty confident at that point that I've gotten it close to correct. So if I can't have anybody look it over, um, I'll publish it. But, um, and we can talk about this later if somebody ever like finds my recipe from that country and they let me know that, um, I haven't done something like exactly authentically. Um, we could talk about that in a little bit about what I do to like, if I make a mistake, what happens there.

Megan Porta:

Yeah, that's interesting. And I love that you do try whenever you can to find locals to kind of give you that feedback because you never know, like you said, there might be one little ingredient that someone's like, wait, you forgot the parsley. Where's the parsley? So you want to make sure to be as true as possible and authentic as possible. What if you can't find enough authentic ingredient that is like really a part of a dish just because we live in America and we might not have access to it. What do you do in that case?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Okay. So this is a great question because it happens to me all the time. And this is probably the part of, I would say this episode that will resonate with most of the food bloggers that are listening because not everybody has a project like I do, but a lot of times people are making, um, like Thai inspired recipes or something like that. Um, that gets its inspiration from a country, but maybe you don't have exactly what you need to make something from that country. So, um, I definitely have a method for if I can't find, um, ingredients, I try really hard because of the theme of my blog specifically, I try really, really hard to drive around to all of the different, like teeny tiny specialty grocery stores in, um, the suburbs of Detroit. Like I always am driving all over the place. Um, but for a lot of people that's not feasible or, um, you know, you might live in like rural Kansas or something like that, and you don't have access to those ingredients. And so if you ever have to do substitutions, um, there's, that's certainly okay. There's just, um, some good ways to go about it, to make sure that, um, you're giving respect to the country that you're borrowing that recipe from.

Megan Porta:

So do you note that, like when you're writing your recipe, do you offer up substitutions or other suggestions?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Yes, definitely. So if I'm changing an ingredient or if I'm changing a cooking method, um, I will always note that in the recipe. I'll note it in the body of the article and then I'll also put it in like the ingredients and the recipe notes too. Um, so even I like if I'm making a recipe from a country and I've driven all over kingdom come looking for an ingredient, I don't expect my readers to do that. Um, even if like you are using a specialty ingredient, but you don't know if your readers are gonna want to go through the effort to find those things. Um, I would always note the substitutions, like, so for example, again, I'll bring it back to, um, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I was making, um, this they're like these little snack bites, um, they're Ethiopian and they're also from Democratic Republic of the Congo to, they kind of shared as a snack. And so in the certain recipe, I mean, you needed this Ethiopian spice blend. Which I could, I, I ordered it off of Amazon. So I had it delivered to my home and that's what I used to make the recipe. But for example, if I wasn't able to find that spice blend or even if I have it, and I know my readers, aren't going to go through the process of ordering this specific spice blend online. Um, I will go through and I'll note, just so you know, this is the spice blend that's normally made for, um, or that's normally used in this recipe. If you don't have access to the spice blend, or if you want to use it as simpler substitution, you can use cayenne pepper. That was my substitution. Um, and then I always link to the actual spice blend. So, um, I found a recipe online that showed how to make that spice blend at home. I linked it to that in my article so that everybody could see, um, what was actually used in, um, DRC and Ethiopia to make that recipe. I linked to the spice blend recipes so that they could use it if they wanted to. And then I also just made a note about, um, what you can actually use instead. And same with cooking methods. If I don't have like, um, I dunno if I don't have a certain pan that things are made in a different country or like in an oven outside that are used to make something, um, I'll try to put in like a, uh, photo, if I can find, um, a photo that's free for commercial use, I'll try to put in a photo of what that normal cooking method looks like. Um, and then I'll kind of detail it out. This is what you would do. Unfortunately, I don't have access to that method here, but, um, this is what I did instead. So just making sure to give honor to what should have been versus what you did and noting that I think kind of covers your bases there,

Megan Porta:

Right? Because if you use an Instant Pot, for example, where the original recipe, you would maybe use like an outdoor pot, you want to acknowledge that, because that could be like a really important piece of the recipes. I love that you cover all of your bases and you try to just like, let everyone know the important parts of each recipe, whether it's cooking method or ingredient or whatever. So this is like, you really dig in and, and this has got to make you extremely diverse. You could, after you're done, you can travel anywhere in the entire world and be like, I know your food. Here's what it's all about.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

That's the hope I hope so. I'm, I'm a little worried by the time I get to the Z's, I'll forget what I did. Yay.

Megan Porta:

You'll have to do refreshers along the way or something. So I'm curious about your followers. So do you find that your followers are following your journey and also making the recipes along with you? Or do you have people that are just following the journey or do you get like just kind of random traffic from Pinterest for a recipe from say Ethiopia or something? Or how, how is that for you?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

So I would say I get, um, a lot of traffic right now. I'm working on this, actually, this is a big point in my blogging journey that I'm working on right now is I'm getting more traffic from Pinterest and search. It's growing every month. But currently a lot of my traffic comes from, um, Facebook groups actually, where, um, I'll put links to the recipes that I've cooked from the different countries and people love, um, you know, seeing different ways to use ingredients that, and like cooking methods that they use at home. So, um, people have the, I found like in the Facebook groups, and people love, um, learning to cook different foods from their kitchen. And then my Instagram followers, I would say are definitely really engaged in, um, the journey of traveling. Like, um, I have people all the time reach out to me like, Oh, I, I am going to this country. Like, what kind of food do you recommend that I eat there? Or, um, I was supposed to have a trip to, um, I, I don't know. I had people like that were supposed to go on trips during quarantine that didn't get to. So they asked like what I would recommend from my blog, what recipes to make and things like that. So that's always like a big compliment that makes me very happy.

Megan Porta:

Yes. And it's a great time to explore new flavors because a lot of us were in the kitchen a lot for the past eight to nine months. So definitely, I don't know. I feel like it's the perfect time for you. You must have had just this little intuition moment when you started your blog and started all of this, because it really is working, not just in your favor, but in your audience's favor and other people's favor because flavor and new things in the kitchen are huge right now, as you know.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Yes, definitely mealtime can get, can get boring, especially if you can't go out to eat and things like that. So, um, that was also something for me too. I came home for the first couple of weeks that I was home and I made the same thing for breakfast and lunch, every single. And I was like, I am so sick of this. I need some like diversity in my food again. So, um, even if like travel isn't necessarily like the thing that you love, it's still good to just like try different types of foods and just get diversity in your dinner and different spices you wouldn't normally use. And those kinds of things.

Megan Porta:

Yeah. It's a great way to travel without traveling for those that either can't travel or don't want to travel. I actually know some people who don't love traveling, which I find really weird because I'm like, how can you not like this? But people there are people like that. So if they don't like traveling, they can actually explore those flavors without doing so. But obviously you have to tread a little bit lately with this topic because cultures, as we've mentioned, it feels so tied to their foods. So how do you tackle this project while avoiding that cultural appropriation that we talked about earlier?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Um, yeah, so I think that it's a really, there's a really thin line between appreciation and appropriation. And all of us, like all food bloggers are doing what we do because we want to appreciate food, right? Like nobody is going out with the intention of appropriating any culture. So you just have to make sure that you do it in the right way. So if you're making, um, a dish with flavors inspired from a certain country, like just do your research, make sure that you're using actual, um, ingredients from that country. So, um, like you, you know, and again, talking about substitutions, getting it checked by locals. I would say, that's how you make sure that you're doing it in a way that shows appreciation and not appropriation. Um, but always, you know, sometimes you are like bound to make a mistake. And if that happens, um, people can get kind of defensive and, um, sometimes people get angry. If you, um, make a recipe that doesn't directly reflect their culture. Like, I will tell you, I have started learning a lot more about this concept. I would say. I mean, I've, I've focused on it the whole time, but I've definitely like, learned so much even in the last six months, because I feel like it's gotten a lot more prevalent in, um, our society, even over the last six months to like really start making sure that everybody's respecting the differences and, um, in different people and making sure that you're honoring cultures in the right way. And so there were a couple of recipes from when I first started blogging that, um, I didn't, it wasn't intentional. I didn't mean to. But I, I didn't make them in exactly the right way. Um, I had like a couple of recipes that I'm thinking about in my head right now that I like know that that happened with. And so, um, sometimes people would like get angry or leave angry comments, or like, you didn't do this right. And, um, it's easy to get defensive about that or to like, get your feelings hurt. But also you just have realize that, like, if you're making recipes that are showcasing a different culture, or flavors from another culture, like you're representing a group of people. And, um, people take that very personally because it's showing like you're using your platform to show the world about their culture. So they want to make sure that you're doing it correctly. And so I would say like, step one, if you make a mistake is just to not get defensive. And then after that, um, I try really hard to say, like to, to comment back to them and say, thank you so much for pointing this out. I try as hard as I can to do research. Um, but obviously I made a mistake here. If you were to make this recipe, what would you do differently to make sure that this recipe is authentic? So I always like come back very calmly and say like, thank you so much for reading my blog. I appreciate you leaving this comment to let me know. What would you do differently? And then, um, if they answer, that's incredible, I will take, I will take their notes. And if they don't answer, I'll go back and I'm trying to find somebody else from that country to give me a note on what to do differently. And then I'll go back, I'll redo it. I'll like put a little edit in my blog post. Just so you know, I, I changed this and there's no harm in that. There's no shame. It's okay. If you make a mistake, everyone's gonna make a mistake. Um, but just like, go back, fix it and move on.

Megan Porta:

What do you do if someone swears at you and because I've had this happen and I wasn't even trying to replicate a dish, I just happened to use a word from a dish that comes from a different country that it's like, not even the same recipe, but I mean, Oh my goodness. So many people got so mad at me on YouTube. And I had to take a lot of the comments down because they were just like rage and swear words galore. I mean, it was like, I could not believe what they were calling me. So like, obviously you just ignore those, but do you have people who get like really upset and, or do most people come to you and just say, this is wrong? Like, are they a reasonable because I, I have only encountered like really, really angry people.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

This, this severe anger. Um, yes, actually I've noticed that regardless, people are, are, um, meaner on YouTube than any other social media platform. I totally understand that. Um, I don't know why, I don't know what it is about YouTube that like brings out the inner rage in people, but people are so much more understanding on Instagram or like comments on my actual blog than they are on YouTube. I don't know. Um, but yes, I do get angry people sometimes if I mess something up. Um, so first of all, if I, if it gets me worked up, I will never answer when I'm worked up because I don't wanna, like, I don't know. I just don't want to like react out of emotion. So I'll like put it away for a little bit. Um, and then I'll come back. Like once I've like calm down or don't feel so like hurt or embarrassed or something like that, or, um, and I will like just leave a kind comment, always kill them with kindness. Like, thank you so much for leaving this comment. Thanks for watching my posts or watching my video or reading my post or whatever. Um, and then again, I just ask them what they would do differently and show them that like, I am not just like doing this on purpose, that like, it was a genuine mistake and I'm like, we'll go back and, and fix my mistake and make sure that it turns out okay. Um, this actually happens to me even a couple of weeks ago. Like, as I've said, I've, I've been working really hard to make sure that this doesn't happen, but even a couple of weeks ago, I put on my Instagram, I was like doing the day in the life with The Foreign Fork. So I'm like, okay, we're making, um, some recipes from this country. I've researched on making sure I'm not doing anything incorrectly, like made this whole big, um, post about or whole big, like Instagram story about how I go through and do my research. And then that day I had had, um, a recipe that I made previously, like a couple of weeks ago. I'd had it go live on that same day. So I'm so excited. This new recipe also goes live. I posted in a couple different places and it was a recipe for, um, at the time, I had grown up here. I recreated a recipe that I had grown up eating, um, that I had seen on, like, it was on my college, it was in my college cafeteria. It was on some menus and near my hometown. And it was, um, this chicken that had pineapple in it. I wasn't making it from any certain country, but I had always seen it called Hawaiian chicken. So I made this post without even thinking about it. I just called it Hawaiian chicken and I posted it. And I got so many comments, like, just because something has pineapple in, it doesn't mean it's Hawaiian. And I was like, Oh my goodness. I literally was just talking about how to not, um, like, you know, how to make sure that you're not doing that. And I did it on the exact same day. And so, um, I just commented and I'm like, you are so absolutely right. Um, I didn't even think about it when I was naming this and my post had just gone live. I went in, I named it pineapple chicken instead of Hawaiian chicken and, um, like changed the wording throughout the post and, um, let them know that they were right and that I was gonna edit it. And then I did and everything was okay.

Megan Porta:

Really? That's all you have to do. You just have to recognize that you just made a little mistake and change it. And I think people really appreciate that and kill them with kindness. That's kind of my motto too. I mean, I've had, I received some doozy comments over the years and like, okay, that was really unnecessary. And I don't appreciate being called that, but I always, every single time, no matter what, I'm always like, thank you for being here, you know, like. And I'm sure that if they actually do take the time to come back and read the comment, they're probably so thrown off. They're like, what? Wait, I was supposed to, that was supposed to make you mad. But yeah, I, that's a huge motto of mine. Like people are going to get upset and whether it's justified or not just be kind back. But this is touchy because you know, you have to consider that this food is somebody's culture. Like it is another country's culture and something that they're probably very proud of. So you just have to really keep that in mind.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Yeah. And I, I think too, it's interesting because I don't think in, I'm assuming most of your listeners are probably in the United States. I'm from the United States. Um, and I don't feel like I have a super big connection to the food of the United States because everything's different. But for, so sometimes it's like at first it was kind of even hard for me to understand. I was like, okay, I like did something a little wrong, but you don't have to like, get so angry about it. But then as I started, like learning and reading and talking to people and like, as I've progressed in my blogging journey, I've realized that like, like some countries they're, they're tiny and like those foods are what they make like, and it's made the same and everybody's grandma makes it and, and like, that's a really, really important part of their culture. Whereas like us, we have like pizza and then we have Thai restaurants and we have the Mexican restaurants and, and, you know, like we have so many different kinds of food. But in other countries, like their food is their food. And like, that's a lot of what people eat and they, they feel like an even stronger bond to it. Then I would say, I feel to the food in the United States.

Megan Porta:

I'm glad you pointed that out because I too went through that process of being like, why are you so offended by this? This is just a recipe, but we don't, we don't think of food here in America, the same way that other countries might. So it's really good to put ourselves in their place and understand that this is really important to them. And we have things that we get worked up that are really important to us that they might not understand. So it's good to just kind of think that way.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Yeah. I think it's our, it's our responsibility. If we're, um, like food bloggers that are making recipes that are influenced from other countries, it's our responsibility to make sure that we're doing it in a way that like makes, makes those people feel proud of the recipes that are on our site as opposed to...

Megan Porta:

Upset.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Yeah. Exactly.

Megan Porta:

So not everyone sets out on such an adventurous path as yours Alexandria, but what are some ways that food bloggers can get involved in more of like, I don't know, tasting the world and their food creations without having to change their niche necessarily, or take on a massive project like yours?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Well, that's a good question. Um, my favorite thing to do, I absolutely love going. Like if I see a specialty grocery store on the side of the road, like if I'm, um, if I'm driving and I see like a Asian Mart that I've never seen before, um, I will like make a mental note of it. And if I ever have some free time and I'm like driving in that area again, I'll go and like browse through and like pick up an ingredient maybe that I've never seen before. And just like, or like a bag of chips that are a different flavor or just something random that'll give me like an authentic taste of what's actually eaten in that country. And I think that that part is so fun to do that. So, um, I would say like, if you want some diversity in foods, maybe like go browse at a grocery store that you've never actually been to before and find something that's interesting to you and then figure out, um, you know, like just, just do like a little taste test to figure out what those flavors are actually like. And if you want to post it on your blog, you can. But, um, it's also just like a really good way to kind of, um, gain some experience and expand your horizons a little bit. Yeah. I learned some different flavors and I think it gives a lot of inspiration too. That'll help your blog be more creative moving forward too.

Megan Porta:

cBecause you never know, you might tap into some sauce or just interesting ingredient that you never would have otherwise explored that you can incorporate into your own stuff. So, yeah, I think that is such a great, simple recommendation for people. It is fun to go into new stores and just see what's on the shelves. And I mean, things are so different in other countries. So it's very interesting to do that. I don't do that much, but every once in a while I will just be called by like a random little grocery store and do that same thing. And it's always, always interesting.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

My mom and I, we call her mama Foreign Fork, um, at the forum. She does some YouTube videos sometimes with me where I like just go purchase some random snacks and we'll do like a little taste. And people love those videos. Like people are very drawn to, um, learning about like the snacks and things like that from countries that they've never visited. I like those are my most popular videos.

Megan Porta:

Interesting! I'm going to have to go watch that. Well, we've covered a lot. I'm just so inspired by your journey and everything that kind of led up to what you're doing right now. And I am excited to follow you and see how you go from A to Z. And even if it takes you 10 years, Oh my gosh, let's do it. I'm excited to follow you. So before we say goodbye, I do want to ask you or touch on this, I guess. You won a Savour blog award for most groundbreaking voice, which I think is so amazing. So tell us like how that evolved and kind of like how you think you, um, rose to the top and like, what are your thoughts on that whole experience?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

So that was honestly the best experience of my whole blogging career. Like I was so grateful for that. Um, so I had, I'd actually didn't for a while. Um, when I first started blogging, I did not know what the Savour awards were. I wasn't even, um, like I hadn't been in blogging long enough to know. And so I saw one of the people that I was following, talking about the Savour awards and how, um, it was open for nominations. And so, um, I went in and I like peeked around at it and I was like, Oh, this is great. Um, but you know, I probably, like the blogger I had been following said, you can nominate yourself, go in and nominate yourself. And, um, I actually did not nominate myself. I was like, well, this is awesome. I'll save this for when I'm a larger blogger. At the time, I only had like 1,200, um, followers on Instagram. Like I felt small. I didn't, I had a small amount of sessions. So like, Oh, this is good to know that this exists. I'll like, look at this again. And another time. And, um, I went to the Taste-makers conference, which I know you were there too. And, um, I met a couple of different bloggers there. Um, and then one of them had won a Savour award the previous year. And so when I came home, um, I was at home and she messaged me on Instagram and she was like, Oh my gosh, congratulations on your nomination. And I was like, nomination on what? She was like the Savour awards. Isn't this you? And sent me a screenshot of this nomination. Oh my gosh. Yes. That is me. I started crying, crying for like days. I was so happy. Um, and so I later found out that, I don't know how many people nominated me. I didn't know for a very long time anybody that had, I didn't know how I got nominated. Um, but I recently did an interview, um, with a food blogger that I follow from Um, um, one of the countries that I was featuring. And so I did a, like a live interview with her and she was like, Oh my gosh, I've been following you for so long. I nominated you for the Savour award. I was like, oh it was you! It was so sweet. So, Oh yeah. So she was from Cyprus. That was, it was, um, really cool.

Megan Porta:

Yeah. That's such an honor.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Once you get nominated, then, um, people go through and they have time to vote for you. So I posted on my Instagram, like every single day, I was like, you guys this means, so much to me, I'm such a small blogger in comparison to everybody else. So like vote as many times as you can. And I had people I didn't even know that were like, I've set alarms on my phone. I've been following you for a year. I set alarms on my phone to vote for you every single day. And like, people that I didn't even know were just, um, like making a commitment every single day to like vote for me and stuff like that. So it was very, um, like it fills my heart with a lot of joy.

Megan Porta:

Oh, I love that. And that says a lot about you, that people were consistently going in and supporting you in that way. And I just, I think that's great. So nice work. I'm so glad that you got nominated and won.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Thank you.

Megan Porta:

Oh, well, this has been such an inspiring conversation. Thank you so much for being here today, Alexandria and sharing this amazing journey of yours with us. It was such an honor to talk to you.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Yeah, thanks for having me. It was so nice to actually get to talk to you too. And I really enjoyed it.

Megan Porta:

Good. Well, thanks again. Before you go, do you have a favorite quote or words of inspiration to share with food bloggers?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Um, yes. So I, um, follow this. I have this quote like taped up on my mirror, um, and it's short, but sweet. It says, um, "if your dreams don't scare you, they're not big enough."

Megan Porta:

Oh, good one. I love it. Yes. That's great.

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Dream, big, dream big.

Megan Porta:

That's right, dream big people. Well, we will put together a show notes page for you. So we'll just kind of go through everything we've talked about today. If anyone's interested in peaking at that, you can find it at Eatblogtalk.com/foreignfork. Alexandria. You've talked about this a little bit, but where can my listeners find you online?

Alexandria Drazagowski:

Um, okay. So my blog is called www.foreignfork.com and then every single other thing is The Foreign Fork. So Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube, they're all at The Foreign Fork.

Megan Porta:

Awesome. Well, thank you for listening today food bloggers. I will see you next time.

Megan Porta:

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