

# A PLACE IN THE WORLD

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**BOOK CLUB KIT**

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**FRANCES MAYES**



# A NOTE FROM FRANCES MAYES

Very dear reader,

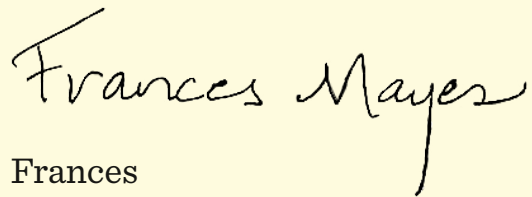
I am happy that you have found your way to *A Place in the World: Finding the Meaning of Home*.

This book was written with pleasure out of my long obsession with making a home, leaving another, looking yet again, and the 10,000 emotions around this charged subject.

What I hope is that the subject engages your own feelings and questions about where you arrange your books, dream, welcome friends, and perhaps long to leave. Yes, the subject is that complex!

I would be happy to join your book club via Zoom. Or to answer any questions prior to your meeting. Book clubs are the best!

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frances Mayes". The script is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "y".

Frances

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Frances Mayes has often written about feeling at home in places that were not or never could be home. As a traveler, have you imagined another life in another place?
2. Why do some places happen to hit us like lightning, making us so taken with them that we are willing to upend our lives to be there? What powers would those places need to have for you?
3. For the author, Provence planted the seeds of a new perception. Travel can do that if you're open to a place. What did Provence offer? Has a place ever had such an effect on you?
4. Where do people get their ideas of what comprises home for them? Do we carry our earliest senses of home with us for the rest of our lives?
5. The book explores friendship—including friends' homes—in detail. In what ways are the homes of friends revealing of the friendship or of the friends themselves? Is it always true that our homes reveal who we are?
6. Food and good meals are mentioned throughout *A Place in the World*. How are food, memory, and home intertwined?
7. How has our digital world changed travel? In this day and age of selfies, social media, Google Maps and Translate, WhatsApp, et cetera, can travel still feel “foreign”?
8. Mayes reflects on stone in the formation of a house—lasting hundreds of years, reminding residents that they are simply passing through in the life of an old house. Did your perception of stone change? How do you see it now?
9. Talk about the shrine at Bramasole. Why does it have such a life of its own? Does it make you want to create a shrine in your own home?
10. “Why Stay?” is the title of the last section of the book. How would you answer this question?

# ROOMS WITH A VIEW

AN IMAGE GALLERY OF PLACES FRANCES HAS LIVED, VISITED, AND WRITTEN ABOUT.

**BEDFORD, MA**



**BRAMASOLE**



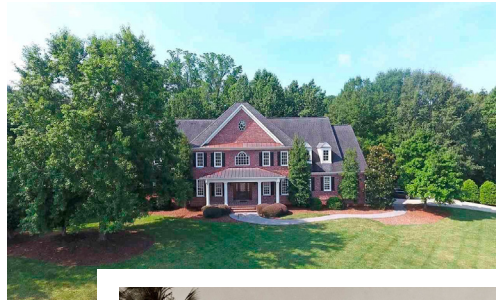
**STUDY AT  
BRAMASOLE**



**MARY'S HOUSE  
VIDALIA, GA**



**MAYMONT  
DURHAM, NC**



**DURHAM, NC**



**CHATWOOD**

**MIAMI, FL**



# SOME SWEET TREATS FOR HOSTING

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## BROWN SUGAR MUFFINS

Southern cuisine often features sweet breads at the dinner table, as well as the biscuits and rolls. My older sisters loved to whip up these delicate little muffins, especially when something salty such as ham was on the table. They're wonderful for breakfast.

Preheat oven to 350°F

- 4 ounces butter
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ cup chopped pecans

In a medium-sized bowl, cream together the butter and sugar until light. Add the egg. Sift together the flour, baking soda, and baking powder, and add it alternately with the milk to the batter. Stir in vanilla and pecans. Pour the batter into a prepared pan for small muffins. Makes about 18. Test after ten minutes to see if tops are set.

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## CAPRESE

This ubiquitous salad can be awful or sublime. It's all in the ingredients. Primo tomatoes thickly sliced, topped with creamy slabs of whole milk, fresh mozzarella, basil, salt, pepper, and a generous drizzle of top olive oil make this summer salad divine. Cut the quality of any one ingredient and it goes to so-so; cut two and we're down to wretched. Several days a week in summer, lunch outside overlooking the hills is caprese and slices of focaccia fresh from the local forno.

We don't drink wine at lunch, but a glass of chilled vermentino often comes to mind.

## LEMON CHEESECAKE

Preheat oven to 350°F

- ½ pound butter, softened
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- 3 cups flour, sifted with the baking powder and salt
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- Pinch of salt
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 4 egg whites, beaten

Beat together the butter and sugar, then beat in the eggs. Stir in the flour and milk alternately and beat for 3-4 minutes before folding in the vanilla and egg whites.

Bake in two 9-inch pans, buttered and lined with parchment, for 25 minutes. Cool the cakes and unmold.

Filling:

- 2 cups sugar
- 4 tablespoons butter, softened
- 6 egg yolks, beaten
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup hot water
- Juice, about 8 tablespoons, and zest of three lemons

Mix the sugar and butter well and beat in the yolks and flour. Add the liquids and cook in a double boiler until "it falls into flakes," stirring all the while. Cool. The filling should have the consistency of whipped cream.

Spread the filling between the cake layers and on top, securing the layers with toothpicks if they start to slide. Frost the cake with a classic Seven Minute White Icing.