

BUSINESS IN ACTION

BUILD A BETTER BUSINESS WEBSITE



WHAT'S YOUR HOME
REALLY WORTH?

Stacey Shanner
REALTOR®

 SHANNER
REALTY

SCAN TO SEE
YOUR ESTIMATED
HOME VALUE!



Front of Tear Out Card 1



The Keys to Crafting an Effective Job Description

Tear out and save this guide to writing solid job descriptions. With these tips, you can recruit qualified candidates and grow your business.

• →



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Back of Tear Out Card 1

- ⌚ **Use a specific job title.** Job seekers start by searching for keywords. Job titles should be very specific but still searchable, such as "UX writer" or "technical writer".
- ⌚ **Be clear about the role's responsibilities.** Include a quick overview of the company, position, and expectations, then list the day-to-day responsibilities.
- ⌚ **List the requirements.** To filter out unqualified candidates, clearly list the skills, education, experience level, and other essentials.
- ⌚ **Suggest the salary and benefits.** Over 80 percent of job seekers state that benefits are central to accepting an offer. Touch on the salary range and benefits like insurance.
- ⌚ **Show some personality.** Describe your company's culture with thoughtful language, and clearly state your company values, like fostering innovation or community outreach.
- ⌚ **Finally, review and update them often!**





Dear Bill and Judy,

The second quarter offers your first true glimpse into your business's growth this year. This issue of Business in Action provides inspiration and ideas to help you build on that momentum, including examples of companies that resurrected their brands and achieved new heights, expert advice on identifying and avoiding entrepreneurial pitfalls, and a simple tool that can help your business stand out from the pack.

Even the best organizations don't always meet projections, but that's when a never-say-die attitude is crucial. Inside, you'll find inspiration in the stories of three well-known brands that hit rock bottom but, thanks to strong leadership and innovative thinking, were able to rebound, rebuild value, and flourish in their respective industries.

Of course, being able to prevent missteps also keeps a company heading in the right direction. Discover how to do just that with insights from business coach and motivational speaker Dr. John L. Terry III, who reveals the seven deadly sins that can sabotage corporate success.

Generating game-changing ideas is what separates ordinary enterprises from extraordinary ones. A simple yet effective way to help such concepts surface is through brainstorming. Learn how to use this tool effectively so that you and your team can uncover the next "aha" moments that generate excitement about your offerings.

What steps will you take to maximize growth? As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

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BRANDING

Three Brands That Defied the Odds

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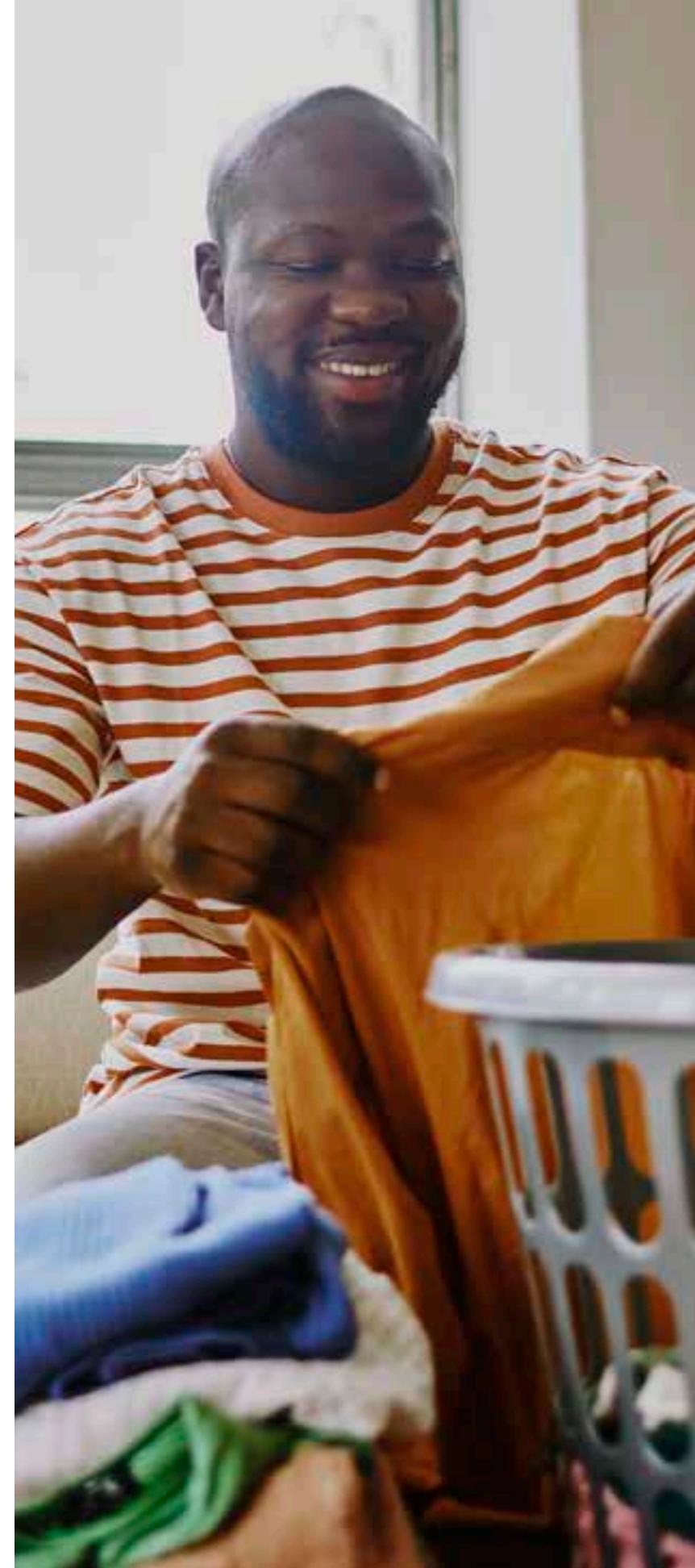
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HELPFUL LAUNDRY hacks

written by: LAUREN KIM



Doing laundry can be an expensive and seemingly never-ending chore. You may wash, dry, and fold load after load only to turn around and find the hamper full once more. But before you decide to throw in the towel, consider these tips that can cut this chore's cost and time in a snap.

Avoid hot water

Make it a habit of washing your fabrics on a cold cycle; most laundry detergents work well in cool temperatures, and using warmer water can use significantly more energy, costing you more per load. However, it may be best to stick to hot water when you need to effectively kill germs, such as when you or a family member is recovering from an illness.

Keep your socks together

With how easily socks can get separated in your hamper or lost in your machines, matching them during folding can quickly turn into a game of *Where's Waldo?* Save yourself some trouble by tossing them into a mesh bag before laundering them, ensuring that they'll stay together.

Reduce drying time

You'd be amazed by how much adding a few wool drying balls, which absorb moisture and improve airflow, can shorten how long your clothes take to dry. These laundry aids can also remove static cling and wrinkles and soften your laundry.

Skip a step

There are many tools you can acquire that allow you to avoid annoying, time-consuming tasks. For instance, consider using separate laundry baskets for lights and darks so you won't have to sort your clothes before washing. And don't bother folding items like socks and underwear—instead, invest in inexpensive drawer dividers to keep them organized.

While you might not ever be able to fully escape laundry day, you can make it easier with these strategies—and get back some much-needed time in your day.

HOW TO *Futureproof* Your Home

written by:
CHRISTY MURDOCK

Both the world and your lifestyle are ever evolving, and that means it's essential to ensure that your home is equipped to meet your future needs as well as your current ones. Enter futureproofing, an approach that involves incorporating design and technology that

adapt to shifting requirements for comfort and safety. Here are three key areas to focus on when upgrading your home to better guarantee its suitability for years to come.



Efficiency and sustainability

When planning for the future, two factors to keep in mind are your home's longevity and your finances, both of which you can bolster by making changes based on efficiency and sustainability. For one, improving your home's energy efficiency may put less strain on your systems and lower your cost of living. Consider solutions that can positively impact your heating and cooling, such as upgrading your home's insulation, installing new windows and doors, and choosing Energy Star appliances when your current ones need replacing. Though certainly more of an investment, solar panels are another great option due to the renewable energy

they produce, reducing your dependence on gas or oil and, in turn, shrinking your energy bills.

Similarly, implementing water-saving features can make your home more sustainable and reduce your expenses. For example, you can switch out your bathroom's fixtures for low-flow versions to reduce water consumption without sacrificing performance. If you're a gardener, you could also collect rainwater to use for irrigation or install a smart irrigation system that adjusts watering schedules based on weather conditions and soil moisture. (Just make sure you comply with local ordinances for water retention and usage.)

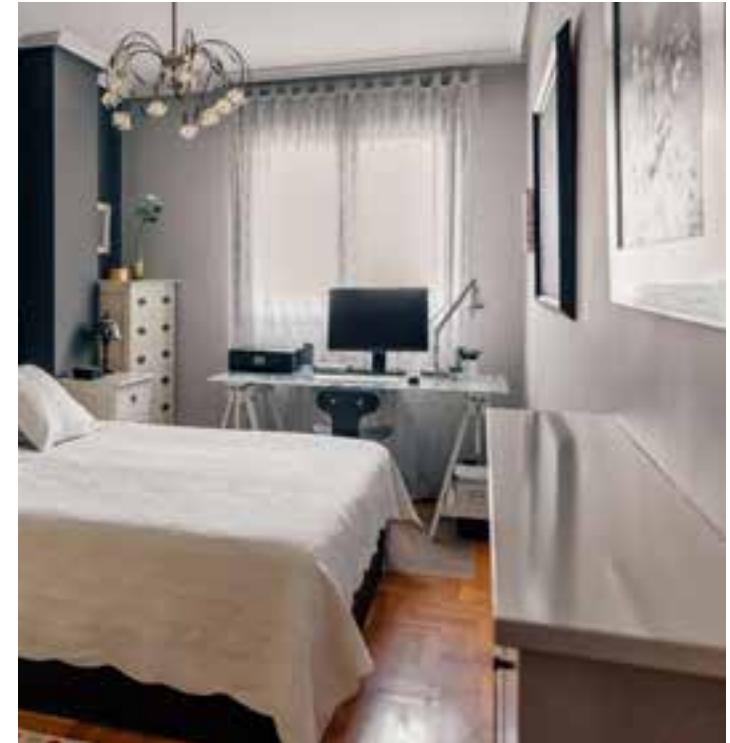


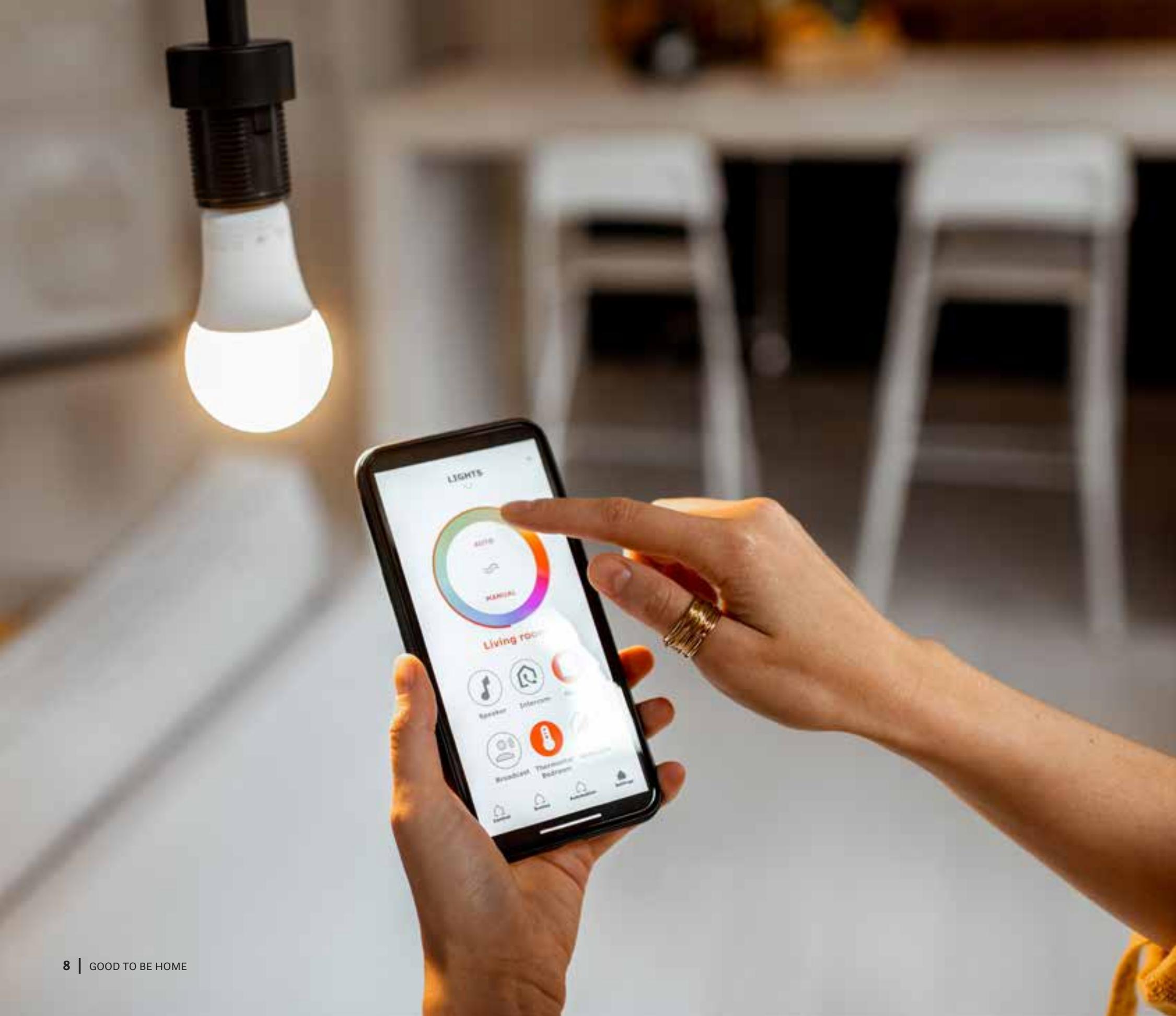
Changing needs

While it's tempting to design your home for the life stage you're in right now, you should instead create flexible spaces for greater adaptability as your needs shift over time. One way to do so is by modifying certain rooms to serve multiple functions, such as by making your home office double as a guest room. Also, invest in furniture that can be reconfigured to suit different purposes and maximize space: think ottomans that provide both seating and storage and foldable tables that can be put away when needed.

In addition to these general upgrades, identify specific changes you can make based on your current life trajectory. For instance, if you're a parent with young children, focus on creating spaces that will grow with them. Forgo overly specific themes in favor of more neutral designs, and invest in multifunctional pieces that can be converted for other uses down the line, such as a crib that could transform into a child's bed when the time comes. With such versatility, it will be easier to make better use of your spaces as your kids get older.

Conversely, if you're on the verge of retirement or have a multigenerational home, look into age-in-place design ideas that can make your house accessible for everyone in the long term. Some good options include modifying doorways for wheelchairs and walkers, creating no-step entryways to minimize injury risk, and installing grab bars and handrails to enhance safety.





Technology

The world is becoming increasingly digital, so it's important to make sure your home is equipped with a robust connectivity infrastructure and high-speed internet to support numerous smart devices for multiple family members. Structured wiring, Wi-Fi boosters, and integrated ethernet ports can help ensure that everyone is and will continue to be up and running as technology grows even more essential for school, work, and connecting with loved ones.

It may also be worth integrating smart upgrades for climate control, lighting, and security, all of which can be run with voice assistants like Amazon Alexa or Google Nest. These enhancements can greatly improve the convenience, safety, and efficiency in your place and potentially reduce your energy costs.

Futureproofing your home is all about creating a living space that is sustainable and adaptable, equipping it to withstand the test of time and handle any changes that may arise regarding technology, your lifestyle, and your physical mobility. By making these kinds of improvements, you can better guarantee that it will remain comfortable, valuable, and ready for whatever your future holds.



Decorating WITH TEXTURE

written by: ANDRE RIOS

Comfort, theme, price, and color may be some of the foremost factors you consider when decorating your home. However, there's another crucial element of good design that often goes overlooked: texture.

This aspect may trip up some homeowners since it comprises many different

facets, including appearance and tactile sensation. But when you're able to fully grasp it and incorporate it mindfully, you can make your home feel more balanced, inviting, and tasteful than ever. Here are some of the most effective ways to add stylish texture to any space.



MIX UP MATERIALS

Different materials carry distinct textural looks that affect how we respond to them: hard or rough surfaces bring a formal edge to rooms, while objects that are soft to the touch are more welcoming. One of the best ways to create impressive interiors is to incorporate a wide spectrum of materials into your spaces that vary from soft to hard, including fabric, wood, ceramics, glass, metal, and stone.



If a room feels off no matter how much you tweak and rearrange it, featuring a new material could offer a solution. For example, say you have a dining room that's full of wooden furniture and feels a bit stuffy. Adding curtains, a rug, and some cushioned seating could lend a comfortable tone and balanced texture to the space.

And don't fret about your materials needing to "match." According to the principles of transitional design, which incorporates elements from different themes and time periods, you can successfully layer varying materials as long as you select them carefully and unite them around a tight, cohesive color scheme. So a living room with antique upholstered furniture could benefit from a surprising piece like a contemporary resin table if it suits the surrounding color palette. This stark visual contrast can also make the space feel well curated and texturally balanced.

USE EYE-POPPING PATTERNS

Depending on who you ask, pattern may not technically fall under the category of texture. But stripes, waves, florals, and other types of patterns can certainly achieve the same effect as other textural details, adding visual intrigue to surfaces.

In other words, patterns are packed with texture, so incorporate them into every room. Structural features like herringbone flooring and slat-wood wall paneling are wonderful options, but it may be more cost-effective to pepper patterns into your accent decor, such as with intricately painted pillows or pottery.

Of course, some restraint is needed—a space with too much variety could have the maddening appearance of a circus tent. Try sticking to three patterns at most per room, placing objects that feature them strategically and surrounding them with flat surfaces. As a straightforward example, you could simply set a striped accent pillow on a solid-colored chair for a powerful effect.



CONSIDER COLOR AND FINISH

Paint doesn't just set the tone for a room; it also has a textural range of its own. Because satin, semigloss, and glossy paints reflect light, they can lend a subtle texture to a space, especially when used to highlight architectural elements like wainscoting or crown molding. Conversely, you can achieve a flat look if you opt for paint with an eggshell or matte finish, which each have low reflectivity.

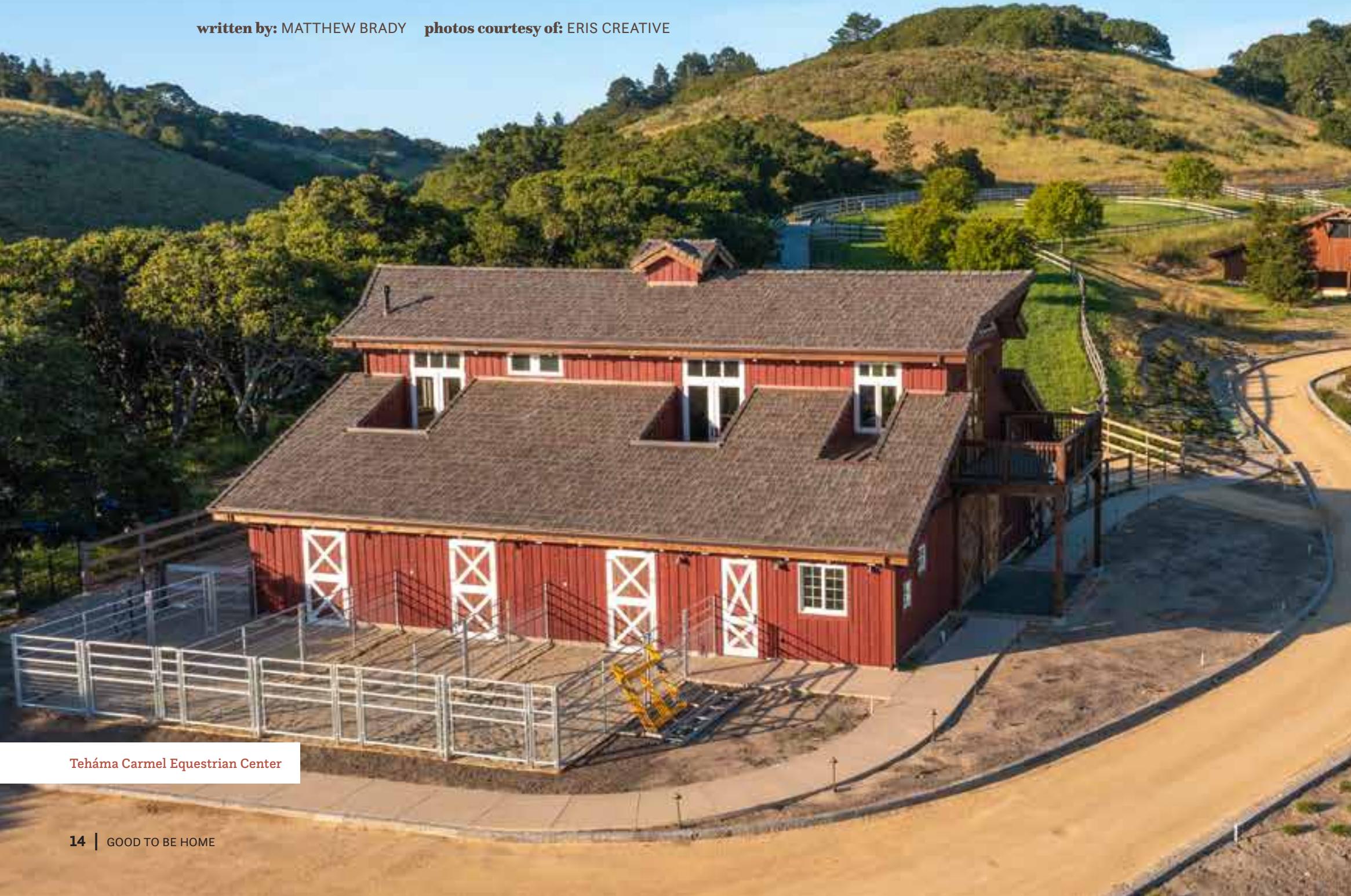
To add even more attention-grabbing texture to your walls, curate an art collection—these pieces will lend instant textural effects to their surroundings. For subtlety, choose paintings with larger swaths of matte color and few hard lines. Or to add significant character to a wall, select a piece that features a greater number of bold shapes or a diverse palette of glossy colors.

Incorporating texture doesn't have to be difficult. Be mindful with your choices, and you can ultimately achieve your desired effect: a high-energy room full of textural variety, a soothing and sparse space where your stress can slip away, or a perfectly balanced place that meets somewhere in the middle.



TOP-NOTCH Timber Structures

written by: MATTHEW BRADY photos courtesy of: ERIS CREATIVE



Teháma Carmel Equestrian Center

For thousands of years, timber frame construction and its principles have been utilized across the world. And it's no wonder why, considering the material's quality, immense strength, durability, and beauty. One leading entity that has mastered this method in the twenty-first century is the DC family of companies: DC Builders, which primarily crafts heavy-timber homes, barns, and other facilities, and its sister company, DC Structures, which specializes in pre-engineered barn and home building kits.

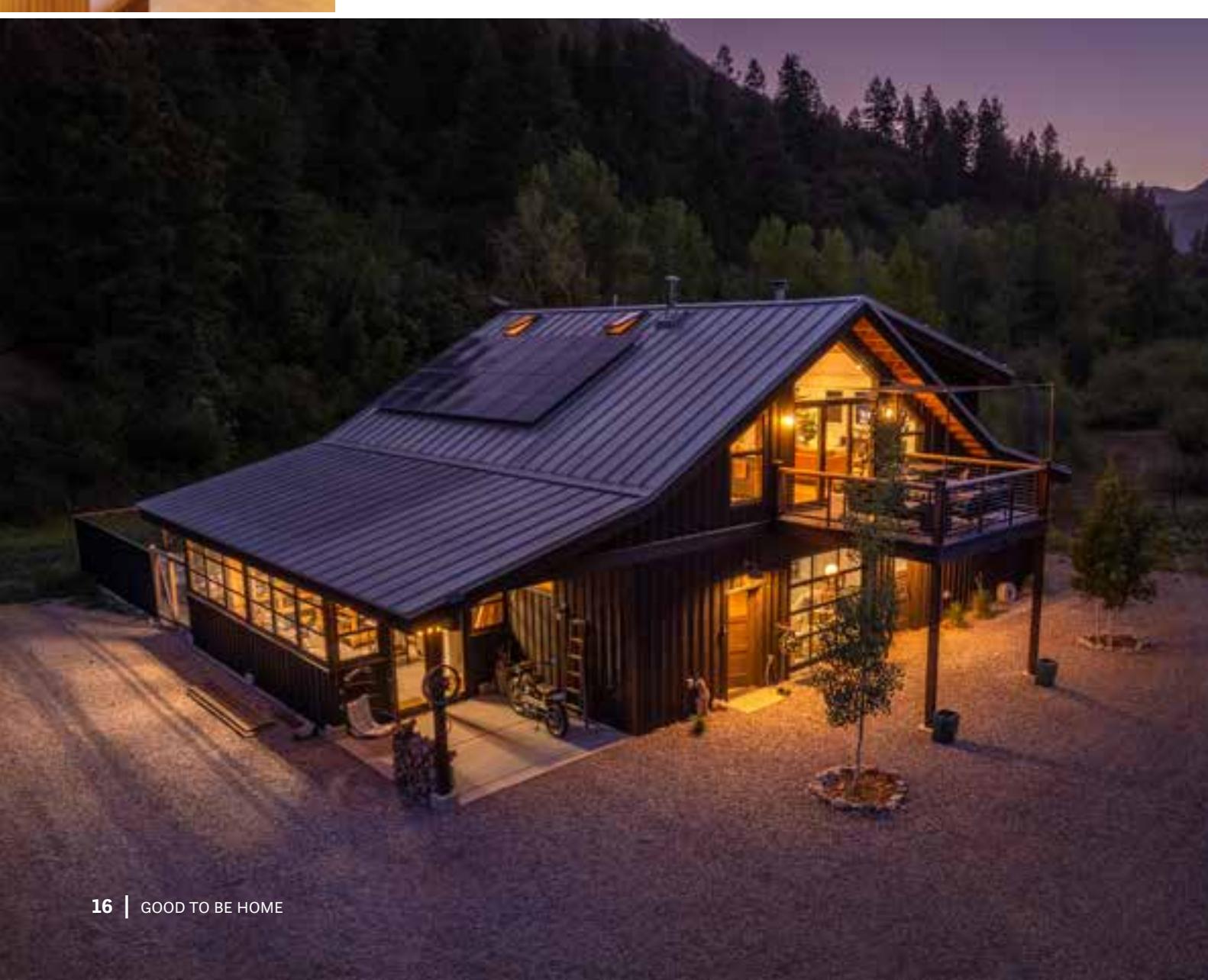
Taking their years of hands-on construction experience, president and CEO Dustin Gruetter and vice president Cole Hansen founded the former in 2002 and the latter in 2015, turning what was originally a local Oregon endeavor into nationwide enterprises. Learn about each company, their amazing projects, and the overall mission behind it all to get a glimpse of the possibilities and impact of this time-honored craft.

DC Builders

The DC Builders arm of this duo does design and construction work with an emphasis on creating high-end timber frame and post-and-beam structures, both for people and horses as well as for residential and commercial purposes. The company's primary focus is on quality craftsmanship—one look at its hundreds of completed projects makes that quite evident—but it also prides itself on its innovation and passion for the trade. It's the go-to of the pair if you want your home to be planned and built from the ground up. Its other service offerings include framing, installation, and general contracting.



(top and bottom)
Durango Barn-Style Home



(top and bottom)
Cornelius Contemporary
Custom Home

DC Structures

If you'd prefer to go with a premade building rather than starting from scratch, DC Structures has you covered. Its line of pre-engineered heavy-timber packages offers customers a huge range of building models, from barns to cabins to homes to garages, making the choices feel virtually endless. After getting through that difficult but fun selection process, you can customize your kit any way you like; there's even the option of bringing on DC Builders to do it for you. The materials, including windows and doors, are then procured and every piece of lumber for the project is precisely cut before being packed and shipped to your property for your general contractor or one in DC Structures' own network to assemble.



Beautiful builds

As touched on earlier, the sheer array of projects completed by these companies is breathtaking—not only because of the quality, craftsmanship, and beauty but also because of just how much each one can be fine-tuned to suit a client's every whim.

As an example, consider a barn-style home DC Structures made for a client living in Durango, Colorado. Beginning with an open-concept building model, the company worked closely

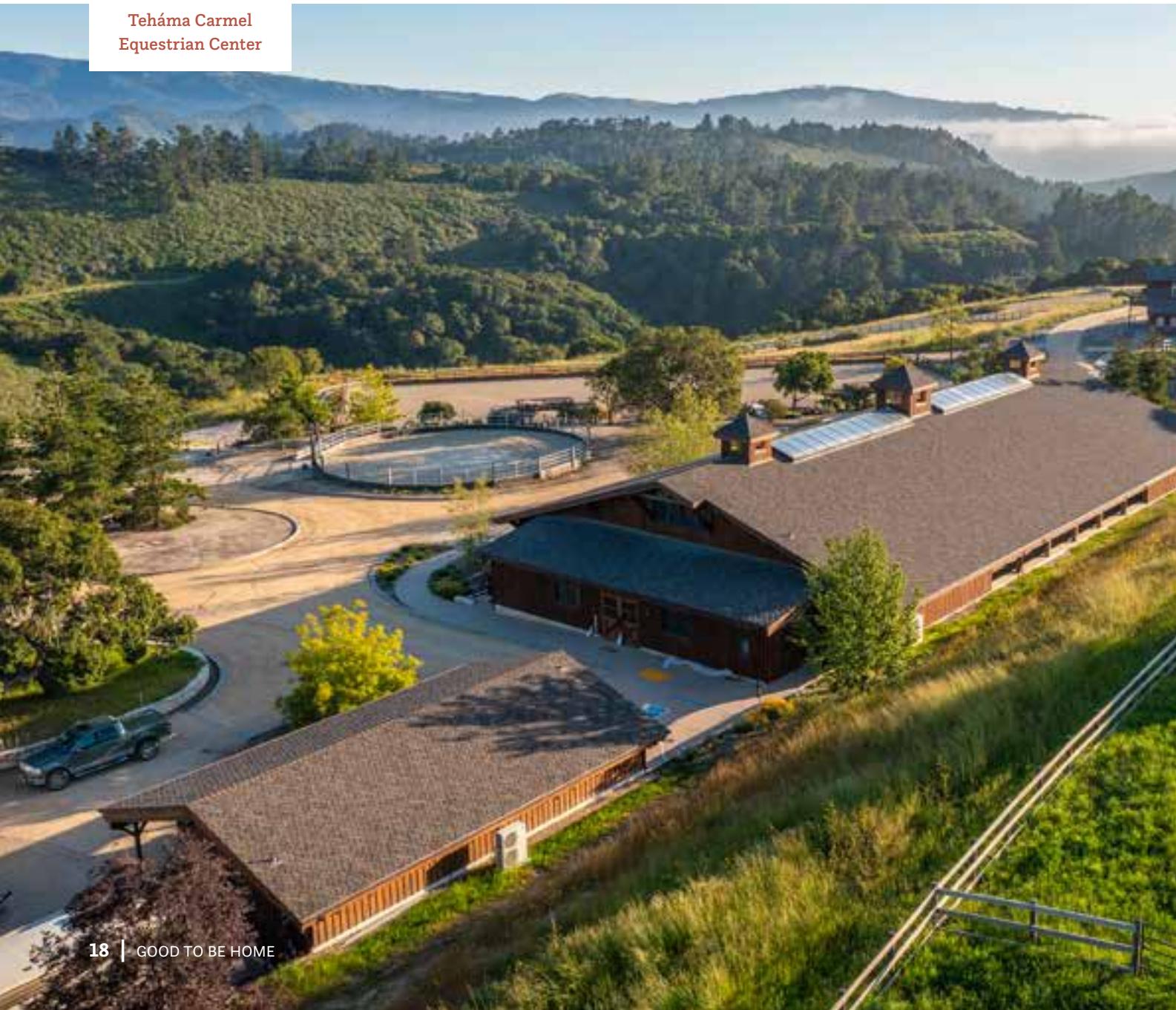
with the homeowner to reshape it with personalized touches and turn it into something uniquely dazzling. Some of the more notable changes included making post-and-beam design the focal point of the main floor, staining the siding, and adding a drive-through garage bay and a huge deck.

Then there's the impressive equestrian-focused project in Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, where DC Builders constructed not one but *four* timber frame buildings for the residential

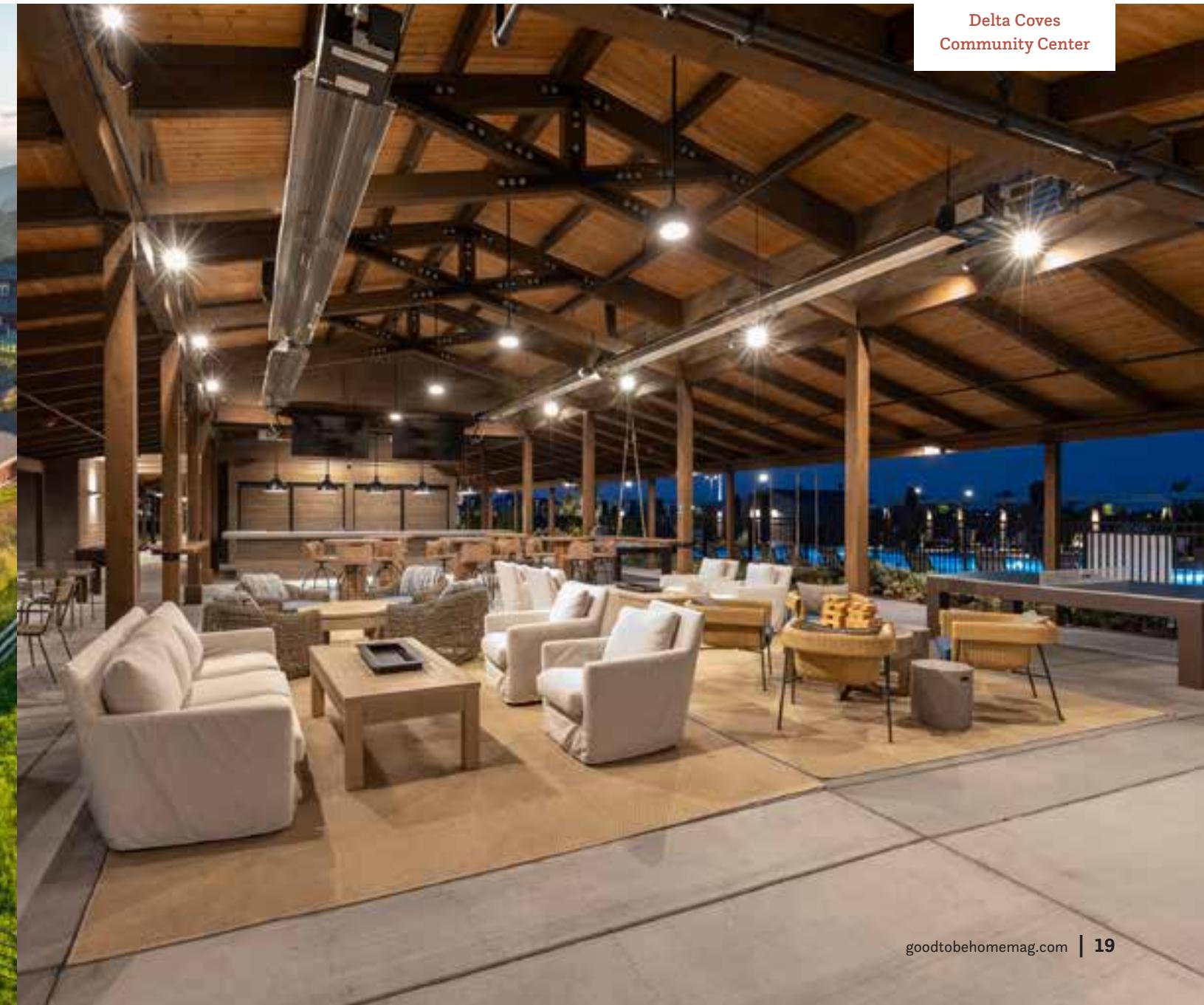
community, including a riding arena that's almost 13,000 square feet. And a few hours north in Bethel Island, California, lies a DC Structures–DC Builders masterpiece: the Delta Coves Community Center. For this project, the former provided six pre-made kits as the starting point and then the latter took care of the custom alterations and construction. The end result includes a jaw-dropping main building complete with a club room, gym, and open-air picnic pavilion.

Perhaps the best example of what can emerge when these two companies join forces, though, is the largest structure the DC team has built to date: a 36,290-square-foot, totally customized, painstakingly detailed home and equestrian facility in Oregon City, Oregon. Among its unique features is the overall layout. The whole bottom floor is the equestrian facility and contains every imaginable need for horse owners, and the 5,000-square-foot-plus house sits atop it. The home even has a deck and balcony that overlooks the riding arena.

Teháma Carmel Equestrian Center

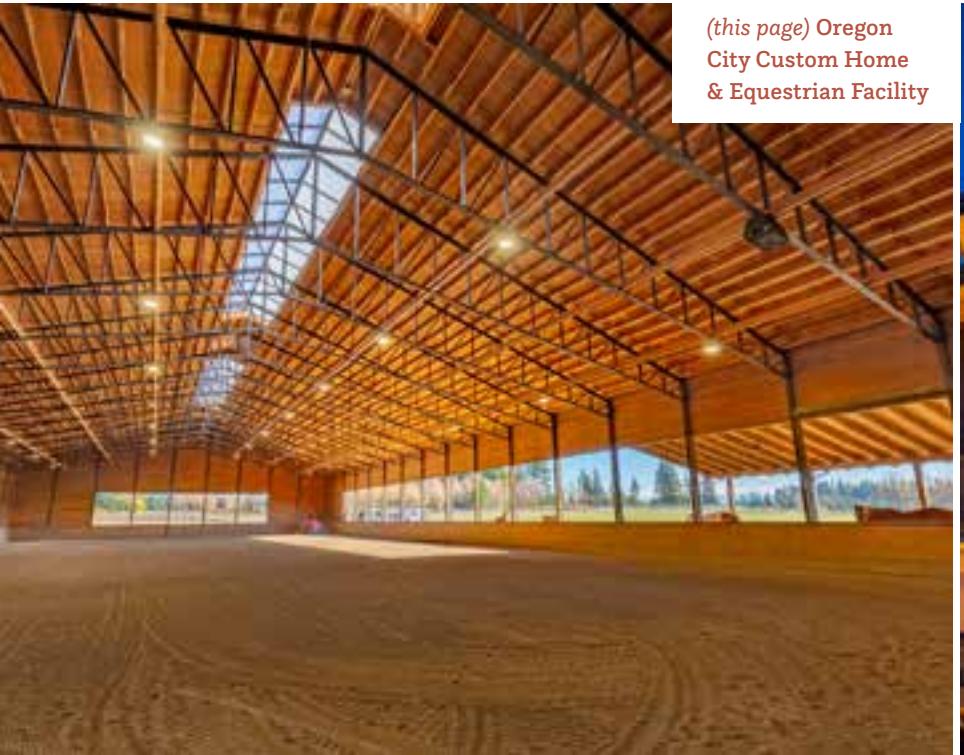


Delta Coves Community Center





(this page) Oregon City Custom Home & Equestrian Facility



Storm King Mountain Ranch Venue



Creating and contributing to community

The final piece of the DC puzzle is its focus on family, one of the duo's core values. Many people on both teams have worked together for several years while also building lasting client relationships, creating strong bonds within and outside the companies' shared walls in Damascus, a town just outside Portland. As the DC Builders website puts it, being part of the DC family means "cultivating meaningful relationships to create a deeper sense of purpose and community within our company." Proving that "family" and "community" extend to the surrounding area, DC Builders also gives back

to Portland by helping Habitat for Humanity build homes, partnering with the child-focused Maurice Lucas Foundation, and hosting an annual holiday toy drive.

What once started as a humble means to help others has, much like the majestic buildings they offer and create, become a symbol of quality and durability across the nation. In this way, DC Buildings and DC Structures carry on a centuries-old craft that's custom-made for life in the twenty-first century and beyond.

For more info, visit dcbuilding.com and destructures.com



The Cost of *DELAYING* Home Maintenance

written by: ALLISON GOMES

At one point or another, you may have noticed a leaky faucet, slightly drafty window, or chipped paint on your home's exterior trim and thought, *No big deal. I'll just take care of it later.* Too often, though, later never comes. And one day, you realize that you're now facing severe water damage, windows that are falling out, or extensive wood rot. That's often the reality of delaying home maintenance: what starts off as a small issue quickly turns into a bigger one that costs you more money in the long run.

The ripple effect of neglect

Many problems in your home don't just happen overnight; rather, they are the result of slow degradation over a longer period of time. Think of a small crack in your foundation. You aren't sure where it came from, but it seems relatively harmless, so you push it to the back of your mind. However, it might be due to a leaky gutter that caused water to pool next to an exterior wall every time it rained, leading the soil to gradually erode, your foundation to shift, and the crack to appear. That's bad enough on its own, but because none of those issues were addressed, water can now seep into the small crack, resulting in more structural damage that could have been avoided if the initial culprit, the gutter, had been fixed right away.





The same idea applies to other areas in your home—your pipes, roof, appliances, HVAC, landscaping, and so much more. Leave issues unattended, and they may come back to bite you in a major way.

The top consequences

As a general rule, you can expect to spend about 1 to 4 percent of your home's value on annual upkeep. That may seem like a lot, but it's worth the investment when you recognize the true costs of deferring your regular maintenance tasks.

Reduced energy efficiency

Though they may just seem like simple irritations, problems like drafty windows and doors shouldn't be ignored. Sure, your thermostat may still be maintaining an adequate temperature, but the reality is that your HVAC is having to work harder to keep your home at that temperature. Without a tight seal, you're continually wasting energy, likely experiencing higher utility costs, and ultimately reducing the lifespan of your home's system, which could mean replacing it sooner than you would have otherwise.

Pricier repairs

Minor home-care tasks are essentially preventative measures since they often eliminate problems before they have a chance to snowball into major issues. When you wait until a pipe starts leaking or your ceiling is sagging, you'll be stuck having to deal with emergency repairs, which are more stressful and substantially more expensive than routine maintenance. Imagine the difference between replacing a worn-out gasket on your faucet now versus paying a plumber to fix a burst pipe later.





Greater insurance concerns

A home with deferred upkeep can be a ticking time bomb for your homeowners insurance. Your policy protects you from covered events, but it may also come with an expectation of reasonable maintenance. If you neglect a known issue and it leads to further damage, your insurer might deny your claim entirely, arguing that proper care could have prevented the greater problems. Even if your claim isn't denied, a history of neglecting these tasks may lead to higher premiums in the future since a poorly kept home presents a higher risk.

Decreased home value

Whether you're hoping to sell your home this year or in five years, try to put yourself in a potential buyer's shoes. If they notice a leaky faucet, for example, it could lead them to wonder what else may be wrong with the house. This may, in turn, reduce your home's value along with your chances of receiving a good offer. On the other hand, regular maintenance demonstrates that you've taken good care of your home, which could make it more attractive to buyers and potentially fetch a higher selling price.

Instead of putting off your to-do list, take a more proactive approach to your home maintenance and fix problems as you notice them. You'll not only save money but also be investing in your home's future and your peace of mind. So always remember: a little effort today can prevent a big headache and additional stress tomorrow.



italian home cooking

recipes and photos by: PAOLA BACCHIA



Nothing's quite as satisfying as generations-old family recipes, which infuse loving care with fresh ingredients for results that are uniquely wholesome and comforting. You'll find such qualities in these selections from *At Nonna's Table*, a cookbook that celebrates a mother-daughter bond over good food and cherished memories.

cinnamon amaretti

Makes about 18

I have taken the liberty of adding cinnamon to my mother's recipe. It gives these soft, chewy amaretti an additional warmth, which I just love. When I have egg whites left over from making custard, I often make a double batch and pop most of them in a sealed bag in the freezer. I take one or two out of the freezer, and after about 15 minutes at room temperature they are ready to be dunked in my mid-morning coffee.

ingredients:

- 2 large egg whites
- Pinch of fine sea salt
- 7 ounces almond flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup caster (superfine) sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- Flaked, whole or blanched almonds, for decorating

instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 320°F fan-forced. Line a large baking tray with baking paper.
2. Using a hand whisk, beat the egg whites in a bowl with the salt until they just turn white and are foaming.
3. Place the almond flour, sugar and cinnamon in a large bowl and whisk to combine. Carefully fold through the vanilla extract and beaten egg whites.
4. Shape the dough into balls about the size of a large walnut. (If the dough is a bit too soft to roll, add a little more almond flour, or even some plain/all-purpose flour.)
5. Place the dough balls on the baking tray, spaced about 1½ inches apart. Flatten the top slightly with your thumb and decorate with almonds.
6. Bake for 20–22 minutes, until lightly golden. Leave to cool on wire racks.
7. The amaretti will keep in a sealed container in the pantry for up to 1 week, or can be frozen for at least 1 month.



SCAN QR CODE
for the full cookbook.

Recipes from *At Nonna's Table* by Paola Bacchia, published by Smith Street Books, 2024.

oven-roasted chicken thighs with mustard & leek

Serves 6

We always had dijon mustard in the fridge, mainly to eat with boiled meats, pork sausages or ham. Mamma also paired it with chicken, garlic and wine in a dish she cooked in the electric frying pan. I used to think there was cream in this dish, as the sauce that was spooned over the chicken was so creamy. The leeks are my addition, and make an ideal bed for the chicken thighs as they braise in the pan juices. This dish is lovely with mashed or pan-cooked potatoes, polenta or even bread—anything that will catch the lovely sauce.

ingredients:

- 2 large leeks
- 6 chicken thighs, skin on and bone in
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup white wine or dry white vermouth
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce butter
- 2 heaped tablespoons dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 7 fluid ounces good-quality chicken stock
- A squeeze of lemon juice

instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 320°F fan-forced.
2. Finely slice the white and pale green stem of the leeks, discarding the roots and tough darker green leaves. Soak the leek slices in a large bowl of water, massaging them briefly with your fingers to dislodge any dirt stuck in the layers. Drain and set aside.
3. Wash the chicken thighs and pat dry with paper towel. Scatter on salt and freshly cracked black pepper.
4. In a frying pan large enough to fit all the chicken in a single layer, warm the olive oil over medium–high heat. Place the chicken in the pan, skin side down. Fry for about 5 minutes, until the skin is golden. Carefully flip the chicken over and fry the other side for about 4 minutes, until it browns. Increase the heat, pour in the wine and allow to partially evaporate for a few minutes. Leaving the juices in the pan, lift out the chicken pieces and transfer to a large baking dish.
5. Reduce the stovetop heat to medium. Add the leek slices, garlic and butter to the pan. Stir in the mustard and thyme, then pour in the stock and season with salt and pepper. Braise the leek, uncovered, for about 15 minutes, stirring now and then.
6. Pour the saucy leeks over and around the chicken. Cover with a lid or foil. Transfer to the oven and bake for 45 minutes.
7. Remove the lid or foil and bake for a further 20 minutes, or until the chicken is nicely roasted and cooked through.
8. Allow to rest for a few minutes before serving with a squeeze of lemon.





Serves 6–8 as a side

peperonata with eggplant & tomato

In the past, eggplant was salted before using to remove bitterness—though most eggplants sold by greengrocers these days are not really bitter. That said, I still salt the diced eggplant for this recipe, as I find it is a great way of seasoning the dish. It does take some time, so feel free to omit this step.

This dish makes a main meal for vegetarians, a substantial side dish, and can also be used as a base for a couple of batches of pasta. It can also be halved and used in a risotto for four people.

ingredients:

- 2 eggplants, about 2 pounds in total
- 1 tablespoon salt, for salting the eggplant
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 small white onion, diced
- 1 garlic clove, finely diced
- 1–2 red bell peppers, cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ –1 $\frac{1}{4}$ inch dice
- 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces tinned peeled tomatoes
- 2–3 basil stalks

instructions:

1. Cut the eggplant into 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ –1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch chunks. Place in a large bowl and toss with the salt, rubbing it into the eggplant pieces with your fingertips. Set aside on a wire rack to drain for about 45 minutes. Rinse under running water and pat dry.
2. Warm the olive oil in a large frying pan over medium–low heat. Saute the onion with a good pinch of salt for about 10 minutes. Add the garlic. After a minute or two, when fragrant, add the eggplant and bell pepper to heat through.
3. Add the tomatoes, breaking any larger ones into smaller pieces with a wooden spoon. Rinse the tomato tin with a few tablespoons of water and add that to the frying pan as well, along with the basil stalks.
4. Once everything is bubbling away, reduce the heat and put the lid on. Simmer for about 45 minutes, adding a splash more water if needed, or until the eggplant is cooked through but not totally collapsed. Taste for salt, especially if you omitted salting the eggplant pieces earlier; if you did salt the eggplant, you may not need any extra salt.
5. Remove the basil stalks and serve warm. Any leftovers will keep in a ceramic or glass lidded container in the fridge for up to 1 week.

spinach & polenta soup

Serves 6–8

The recipe for spinach and polenta soup is from Friuli–Venezia Giulia, the region in north-east Italy where Mamma's family moved after they left the Veneto. It is simple but surprisingly hearty. The dish can be enhanced by crumbling in a couple of pork sausages—or even some finely chopped pancetta—at the start, and/or replacing the vegetable stock with a homemade meat stock. The addition of parmesan is not traditional, but adds a lovely creamy and salty edge, and is my preferred way to enjoy this thick, rustic soup.

ingredients:

- 2 large bunches of English spinach, about 1 pound 12 ounces in total
- 1½ ounces butter
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, crushed or finely chopped
- 54 fl. oz. warm homemade vegetable stock or 54 fl. oz. boiling water plus a good-quality stock (bouillon) cube
- 4½ ounces coarse polenta (not instant)
- 2–3 handfuls of grated parmesan

instructions:

1. Wash the spinach several times in plenty of water until it drains clean. Remove the roots and any damaged leaves. Place a large saucepan over medium–high heat. Add the spinach, in batches if needed, and allow to wilt, using tongs to help push the leaves down. Once wilted, remove from the heat. Drain the spinach, reserving all the liquid that drains from the pan for your stock. Chop the leaves and set aside.
2. Warm the butter and olive oil in a large heavy-based saucepan over medium–low heat. When the butter has melted, add the garlic and cook for a few minutes, until fragrant. (If using sausages or pancetta, add it here and allow to start to colour slightly.)
3. Stir in the drained spinach, coating it with the butter and oil. Pour in the stock and season with salt to taste. Slowly allow the mixture to come to the boil. Shower in the polenta, stirring well with a large wooden spoon so the polenta doesn't form lumps. The mixture should simmer slowly, the polenta grains absorbing much of the stock and thickening the contents of your pan. You will need to stir frequently, not all the time, but every couple of minutes to make sure it cooks evenly and doesn't catch on the base of the pan.
4. Simmer for about 30 minutes, or until the polenta grains soften and the mixture is as thick as you would like it to be—remembering that it will continue to cook and thicken when you take it off the heat.
5. Stir in the parmesan, or pass it around at the table. Serve immediately.



a kitchen-appliance **SHOPPING GUIDE**

written by: LAUREN KIM

Whether you're moving into a new home or updating your current one, shopping for new kitchen appliances can be a complicated task. With so many brands, models, and technological features available, it may be easy to get overwhelmed. Use this guide to take some of the guesswork out of the decision process and find the best models for your style, needs, and budget.

THE BASICS

Price is one of the biggest factors to consider when choosing kitchen appliances. According to the home-project website HomeGuide, a standard package (refrigerator, stove, dishwasher, and microwave) ranges between \$2,100 and \$5,400 on average. But these costs can vary widely based on the type, model, and features. For instance, a no-frills, top-freezer fridge may demand less than \$400, while a high-end, glass-front model with an air-purification system based on NASA technology could put you out more than \$15,000.

To avoid overspending, set a budget before shopping and identify the exact parameters you want; if you're buying multiple appliances, you may also be able to reduce the total price by bundling them together. Be sure to carefully measure your space beforehand so you know what length, width, and depth you need. And for a cooktop or oven, you'll need to decide whether to get a gas, electric, or induction model; if your home doesn't support gas appliances, you may be able to equip it to do so for an extra cost.





STYLE

An appliance's style can significantly impact a kitchen's look, so pay attention to aspects like the color, material, and shape as you shop. Stainless steel, black, and white are popular and versatile choices, or you could opt for a more out-of-the-box hue like yellow. For a seamless appearance, consider counter-depth appliances that won't protrude past your cabinetry—just note that they may cost more than standard-sized ones. Whatever you choose, pick something you'll be happy with for the long term since most major appliances last between eight and fifteen years on average.

FEATURES

Of course, look isn't the only factor to think about when browsing kitchen appliances—functionality is equally important. What features you prioritize will depend on your cooking habits. Serious home chefs, for one, may want a range with handy options like a double oven or an air fryer. You could also invest in an industrial-style range hood to efficiently remove smoke, grease, and odors from the air as you work your magic.

Meanwhile, if you often feed a crowd, consider a dishwasher with a durable stainless-steel tub. Some also offer an extra third rack for silverware and other small items to free up room for more dishware.

As for your refrigerator, its configuration can make a huge difference in its capacity. For example, a French-door model will give you extra fridge space, whereas a side-by-side one can yield extra freezer room. And if you're a big ice cream fan, you may appreciate a top-freezer option so your frozen treats can be more readily accessible at eye level.





YOU CAN USE ABOUT
15 PERCENT LESS POWER
BY CHOOSING AN INDUCTION
RANGE OVER AN ELECTRIC-COIL
OR GAS-POWERED ONE.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Kitchen appliances can gobble up a lot of energy, so do yourself and the earth a favor by buying energy-efficient models. An easy way to ensure this is by selecting ones with an Energy Star label, meaning they've met strict EPA energy-efficiency standards. In addition, you can reduce how much energy your refrigerator uses by opting for a top- or bottom-freezer model over a side-by-side or French-door version—the larger doors on the latter two allow more warm air into your fridge, making it work harder to stay cool.

Keep the type in mind when selecting ranges and ovens as well. You can use about 15 percent less power by choosing an induction range over an electric-coil or gas-powered one and 20 percent less by picking a convection oven over a standard one, according to Consumer Reports.



SMART TECH

Today's appliances don't just cook, wash, or cool—they can also give you access to the internet to assist with everything from prep to cooking to cleanup. For instance, some smart fridges will send you an alert when you're running low on something or when an item is close to its expiration date; you may even be able to order what you need right from the fridge itself. Such appliances will likely cost more than standard models, but the convenience they provide may make the extra expense worth it.

Buying kitchen appliances can be a big investment, so do yourself a favor by researching the reliability and features of any models you're considering. Choose wisely, and you'll increase your odds of purchasing products that can serve you well for years to come.



WHAT TO LOVE ABOUT *landscapers*

written by:
ANDRE RIOS

There's nothing like having views of verdant vines, blossoming flowers, and other greenery outside your window. A lush landscape can make your home feel like your own personal slice of paradise, and it may even add significant value to your property.

But if you find yourself instead feeling dissatisfied with the plant life in your yard, it may be time to take on professional assistance. Enter landscapers, green-space experts who specialize in transforming plain or paltry yards into inspiring masterpieces. Explore what these experts do and how they could elevate your home's natural environment.

CRAFT ATTRACTIVE OUTDOOR SPACES

Whether you're looking to cultivate a themed ambience like a tropical resort escape or simply spruce up your current design, a landscaper can help bring your vision to life. They will consult with you about your lawn-and-garden concept then use their experience and knowledge to style up a scheme that's sure to impress—while also considering important factors like practicality, eco-friendliness, your budget, and the unique features of your property.

Of course, landscapers don't offer just creative insight. They also have the tools to implement your plans, equipping them to perform a variety of services ranging from sculpting terrain and installing plant species to laying walkways and even building some structural elements like pergolas. Naturally, different companies will have their own project specialties (and limitations), so it's best to ask any you consult with to explain their skills and capabilities before hiring them.

OFFER CARE ADVICE

What makes florals so fickle and grass so fussy? Turn to a landscaper for the answer—they are a repository of knowledge of various plant life, including trees, shrubs, flowering plants, edible plants, vines, grasses, and more. It doesn't matter if you are seeking ongoing tips for maintaining your landscape's greenery or just need a hand in overcoming some growing pains; this professional can offer personalized recommendations to help you sustain a healthy, attractive yard.

A landscaper can even advise you on ways to ease your yard's maintenance needs. For example, if you want to plant a garden with reduced water demands, they can implement a more sustainable xeriscaping scheme that features native plants and omits grasses. Meanwhile, if you're looking for solutions to poor drainage, they can make adjustments like leveling the terrain. Overall, enlisting the services of a landscaper can yield a yard that not only looks beautiful but is also hardy enough to remain that way for years to come.

CONNECT YOU WITH OTHER CARE NEEDS

While landscapers boast a broad range of skills, they might not be able to tend to more specific needs—but they may direct you to someone who can. With their comprehensive yard-care insight, they can assess any issues you may have and determine which services are most appropriate. For instance, if you're concerned with the health of a mature tree on your property, they could suggest a top-level arborist, often known as a "tree doctor" for their ability to diagnose and treat tree-related afflictions. And for ongoing care such as grass cutting and lawn seeding, they could recommend a local lawn-care expert.

Whatever your goals for your yard may be, a landscaper is an excellent first contact, offering a breadth of knowledge and expertise to suit your various needs. Get in touch with a landscaper near you, and you'll take the first step toward creating an enjoyable outdoor oasis you'll treasure every day.





EASY HOME UPGRADES to Make

written by: CHRISTY MURDOCK

After months of being cooped up, homeowners are often itching to get to work enhancing their living spaces and curb appeal once winter begins to give way to spring. Here are a few of the most cost-effective upgrades to consider as you prepare for the warmer months ahead.

INSULATE and weatherproof

You may think of this as a cold-weather fix, but proper insulation and weatherproofing can help save you money and provide comfort year-round. To reduce heating and cooling costs, check for drafts around windows and doors and seal them with weatherstripping or caulk.

UPDATE your windows and doors

If your DIY efforts don't solve the problem, replace old windows and doors with new ones to boost your home's energy efficiency and add value. Double- or triple-paned windows can form a better barrier between indoor and outdoor temps, while a new entry will improve security and curb appeal, giving your home added safety and a fresh look just in time for spring.

MONITOR your HVAC system

Schedule a professional maintenance check before spring to ensure that your system is in top condition and ready to transition to cooling mode. Depending on its age, you could also consider installing a new furnace or heat pump to enhance your home's comfort and reduce your energy expenses.

REFRESH your interiors

Spruce up your living spaces to bring the spirit of spring indoors. For instance, a new coat of paint in a seasonal color, such as a light beige or green, can brighten up any room. You can also update textiles like curtains, rugs, and throw pillows to give your home a clean new feel.

MAINTAIN your roof and gutters

Melting snow and spring rains can be hard on roofs and gutters, so make sure to inspect yours for missing shingles or leaks. Also, regularly clear your gutters of leaves and other debris; when well maintained, they should direct water away from your home, protecting your foundation and landscaping.

PREP your outdoor spaces

If you have been dreaming of relaxing in the sunshine, now is the time to start planning your garden and booking contractors for more substantial changes, such as installing a patio or outdoor kitchen. Come spring, clear away winter debris, prune dead branches, and prepare your flower beds so you're all set for planting.

Take advantage of the transition between winter and spring to ensure that your home is ready for the warmer weather ahead. Whether you focus on energy efficiency, curb appeal, or comfort, improvements such as these can provide lasting benefits and boost your enjoyment of your spaces.



BRAINSTORMING BASICS

Brainstorming is a time-tested method that's been used by people in practically every field, from teachers helping students to C-suites nailing down mission statements. It can even unearth game-changing "aha" moments—but whether it takes you and your team down such a path or leads you to meander aimlessly depends on how you utilize it. **BY MATTHEW BRADY**

► BEFORE

Much like a competition, you need to establish the purpose and rules. Before a session, determine all the key brainstorming parameters, such as:

- How long will you meet for?
- What's your clearly defined goal?
- Who will be involved?
- What method (e.g., hand raising?) will everyone use to share their thoughts?
- Who will keep track of the ideas?
- How will the input be recorded: by video or note-taking?

► DURING

Wielding total control of the room may be the norm in a business setting, but now's the time to loosen the reins. After conveying the goal to participants, declare that your session will be a judgment-free zone where everything said is considered and everyone can give their opinions.

► AFTER

Even once the final suggestion is made, the task isn't complete. You still have a wealth of information you need to pore over, asking yourself which concepts could help you meet your objectives—if not grow your business exponentially. Now is the time to be judicious, eliminating any that aren't feasible and exploring how to implement the ones that are.

Innovation is the heartbeat of every successful company, and that requires people coming together to find the best ideas possible. By using brainstorming intentionally, you can not only show that you value your team's input but also open the door to endless possibilities. ■



Take Action

Apply these tips to your next brainstorming meeting, then follow up with the participants about its productiveness.



For all that you put into your home,
**YOU DESERVE TO GET THE
most OUT.**



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HOW TO BE UNFORGETTABLE IN BUSINESS

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Back of Tear Out Card 2



- Optimism**
Being optimistic isn't just healthy for you. It can also be a boon to your business and make you more memorable to others.
- Reliability**
As the adage goes, "Say what you mean and mean what you say." Meet your clients' demands, exceed their expectations, and provide positive outcomes.
- Tenacity**
If you want successful follow-up calls, you have to take the word "no" on the chin and transition it to a commitment to try again in the future.
- Self-confidence**
Confidence conveys competence and tells your customers you will reach your goals for them.
- Respectfulness**
Don't just treat others the way you want to be treated; treat them the way *they* want to be treated.
- Interpersonal connectedness**
There's an emotion at the root of every product or service. If you want to be more memorable, connect with your audience on a personal level.
- Resilience**
The ability to adapt to a changing industry and overcome challenges for your clients will leave a positive impression on them. Take setbacks as opportunities to prove your strength.

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