Compliments of Stacey Shanner

AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

THE MAGAZINE CELEBRATING LIFE IN AMERICA

ISSUE 129

COMFORTABLY CURATED

Fashioning functional designs for families / PAGE 20

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The Shanners

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Welcoming a New Pet / **02**

Tips for a Facade Upgrade / **10**

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Front of Tear Out Card 1

The Shanners

57 percent of readers save these tear out cards to reference recipes and other helpful tips and pass along your contact info to referrals.

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Back of Tear Out Card 1

SPICY CORN, BACON
& kale salad

INGREDIENTS

- 4 slices middle bacon, rind removed
- 2 corn cobs, husks removed
- Olive oil, for brushing
- 6–8 curly kale leaves, stems removed and leaves shredded
- 9 oz. mixed cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2 avocados, cut into thick slices
- 4 spring onions (scallions), finely chopped
- ½ jalapeño chili, deseeded and thinly sliced
- Toasted pepitas, to serve

TANGY LIME DRESSING

- 1 large egg yolk
- 1/3 c. lime juice
- 1 c. coriander (cilantro) leaves
- 2 tsp. honey
- ½ jalapeño chili, deseeded and thinly sliced
- ½ c. olive oil
- ¼ c. vegetable oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1/ Cook the bacon in a non-stick frying pan over medium–high heat for 6–8 minutes, turning occasionally until browned and crisp. Transfer to a chopping board and cut into pieces.

2/ Preheat a barbecue grill to medium. Brush the corn with a little oil and cook on all sides until just charred and the kernels are tender. Remove, cool and cut off the kernels.

3/ Combine the kale, tomato, avocado, corn, spring onion and chili in a large salad bowl.

4/ Except for the oils, place the dressing ingredients in a small food processor and blend well. Combine the oils in a jug. With the motor running, pour in the oils in a slow steady stream until the mixture has thickened. If the dressing is too thick, just add a small amount of warm water. Season to taste.

5/ Lightly toss the salad ingredients with the dressing, scattering the bacon pieces and toasted pepitas over the top.

SERVES 4 AS A SIDE

Recipes from ***The BBQ Companion: 50 Recipe Cards for Grilling Perfection*** by Oscar Smith. Smith Street Gift, 2023. Photography © Billy Law

AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

Dear Bill and Judy,

We don't speak the same language, yet our pets teach us so much about life. This issue of American Lifestyle celebrates the joy we get from animals, and it includes tips for welcoming a new pet into your home, a look at one organization's mission to save and protect burros, and a visit to a variety of cat cafés across the country.

Whether you are about to become a pet parent for the first time or are simply looking to extend your family, it's important to prepare yourself and your living space for this new addition. Inside you'll find guidelines for making this transition a positive one for everyone.

Burros may not be the first animal that comes to mind when you think of the word "pet," but they are highly intelligent creatures that are capable of so much sensitivity and love. Kim Welk, owner of Burro Base Camp in Colorado, shares the nonprofit's mission of caring for and rehabilitating these animals.

For cat lovers, there's hardly anything better than snuggling up in a comfortable spot with a fuzzy feline friend; that is, unless you can cuddle with two, three, or more! And that's exactly the experience you can have at one of America's many cat cafés. We explore a handful in this issue and the special experiences each offers its patrons.

Here's to pets and the happiness they add to our lives. As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

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Introduce your cat or dog to each person you live with one at a time so the animal doesn't get overwhelmed.

WELCOMING A NEW PET

Written by **Lauren Kim** / Photography by **Getty Images**

Are you bringing home a new dog or cat? Use these tips to help make their transition smooth.

Protect their health

Obtain copies of your pet's medical records if you can. You'll also want to find a vet to give them a checkup, spay or neuter them if they haven't been already, bring them up-to-date on their vaccinations, and insert a microchip if you wish to identify them should they get lost.

Stock up

Get kibble, bowls for food and water, toys, a litter box for your cat, and a leash, collar, ID tag, crate, and pee pads (if they aren't house-trained) for your dog.

Prep your spaces

Put any loose, small objects they could ingest, such as rubber bands or thumbtacks, out of reach or in a sealable container. Secure doors and windows, and get protective covers for electrical cords and outlets. Also, prepare a spot for your pet to sleep, such as in a crate or pet bed, near your bed to help them feel more comfortable.

Welcome them home

Introduce your cat or dog to each person you live with one at a time so the animal doesn't get overwhelmed. Let them explore your home, but watch them carefully; you may even want to keep your new dog on a leash. Show them where their food, water, and bed are, and take them to their litter box. If you have other pets, it's a good idea to keep them apart at first, especially if your new family member seems wary or isn't fully vaccinated. You can introduce them to each other later as your adoptee gets more at ease.

Create a schedule

Stick to regular times for eating, sleeping, playing, and going on walks; most cats and dogs find routines comforting.

BEAUTY *of the Burros*

Interview with **Kim Welk** / Written by **Alexa Bricker**
Photography courtesy of **Burro Base Camp**

Most people might not assume that burros (also known as donkeys) are intelligent, caring, and sensitive by nature—but Kim Welk of Burro Base Camp in Kiowa, Colorado, knows better. Here she reveals how much love and affection these creatures can provide.

What was your life like before caring for burros?
I was an athlete and played and coached competitive soccer in high school and college. Once my kids were born, they didn't want anything to do with soccer, so I transitioned to leading the running club at their elementary school. My husband and I started running and eventually got involved with marathons and triathlons, including IRONMAN races.

One of my husband Mike's training partners invited him to run with burros in an event called Pack Burro Racing. He learned this race has a long history in Colorado and was excited to try it out. He was hooked. For the first few years, he rented a burro because we lived in suburbia. Eventually, we decided as a family to move to the country and establish a farm. We adopted our first burro shortly thereafter.

When did you become part of Burro Base Camp?
Our paths crossed with Burro Base Camp and its founder, Nicki

Creasey, in 2019 when we adopted our second burro, Minnie. We then adopted Mazie, our third, from Burro Base Camp too.

These burros from Burro Base Camp were part of the Bureau of Land Management's [BLM] Wild Horse and Burro program. Together with BLM, Nicki would work with previously wild burros, gentling them and teaching them to trust and interact with people. She would also teach the burros valuable skills to help them succeed in domestic life, including leading and picking up their feet.

In 2021, Nicki found out that her family was relocating to Florida. She made the difficult decision to shut down her business, thinking there was no way for it to run without her.

She had built such an amazing community, helping over 250 burros. We were just heartbroken to think of it going away.

By this point, our family had moved to a larger farm in Kiowa. We had five burros and had started to homestead. A big part of my and Mike's careers involved building businesses, so we talked to Nicki about the opportunity to keep Burro Base Camp open, and the transition to our property occurred shortly after.

Where do most of the burros you take in come from?
This transition occurred right at the end of COVID, which was interesting because during the pandemic, most of the program's basic operations ceased. We found ourselves with more adopters than burros available from BLM. We now find burros in other places, such as online marketplaces and auctions. I have feet on the ground in many places who are able to transport the burros to us. We also found a need to assist people who are moving and not able to care for their burros.

We currently have fifty burros we're caring for, but that number is always changing.

Do they need a lot of work to rehabilitate?
Many of the burros we bring in were well cared for, but they need a little fine-tuning. We trim their feet and vet them as needed upon their arrival. Once settled in, we'll refresh their skills so we can prepare them for their new homes. Some of the burros have had more negative experiences with humans; we spend a lot of time trying to gain their trust and teach them that people are OK.

We use the word "touch" to signal that we're going to touch them, and if they let us put even the end of a fingernail on them, they'll get rewarded. It's a slow process. Everything we do is at the burros' own pace and comfort level.

What does a typical day of caring for dozens of burros look like?
Our day starts very early. My husband is a firefighter, so before he leaves for his shift, he does all the morning feedings and the first round of chores—all by the light of his headlamp. When I get up and get ready for the day, I respond to emails and requests to join our Facebook group, supporting adopters and burros as they transition.

Once the inside work is under control, I head out to the corrals, fill the water tanks, and make sure everyone has what they need for the day. I'll then move into training and working with the burros, or I'll travel to deliver and pick up burros and to meet and support our adopted burros and their adopters. This includes many farrier visits and outside care.

Most days, the burros start hee-hawing at about 3:30 a.m., and we wake up and do it all again.

How would you describe the human-burro connection?
The cliché is that burros are stubborn and stupid, but the truth is that they are probably some of the smartest animals alive. [Burros] observe you and, once they trust you, are willing to show you all their cards. They're also incredibly loving, caring, and emotional.

> "[Burros] observe you and, once they trust you, are willing to show you all their cards. They're also incredibly loving, caring, and emotional.

One of our adopters had a burro who lost his horse companion. The burro went through a period of mourning, just as a human would in losing his partner. We were able to place another burro in their home to provide support through the transition.

Is there a burro-rehab success story that stands out to you?
I have so many, but the most rewarding one so far was when we brought in a baby we

got from auction. We named him Crackers. Our vet aged him at about eight months old, but we had no idea when he was separated from his mom. His immune system was very weak, making him more susceptible to illness.

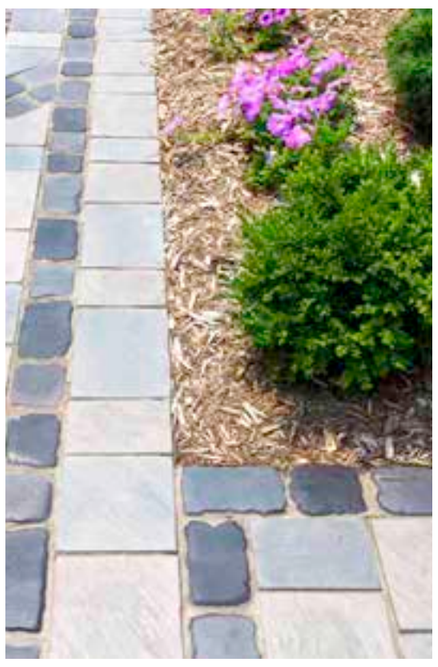
The rehab process required a lot of learning on our part since we had never taken in a baby burro before. He quickly became my little buddy. Crackers and his brother, Oyster, eventually got adopted. Fortunately, his adopter sends me updates all the time. Crackers is finally starting to grow some hair back and putting on weight, which is beautiful to see.

How has the experience of running a burro nonprofit changed your life?
Typically, when you're building a business and trying to make it successful, you have the choice every day of whether or not you want to do the work or take the day off. But when you lie in bed in the morning with fifty burros outside, you don't have that choice. We just hit our two-year mark and have successfully placed 109 burros. Our burros are first in everything we do. The rest of our lives takes a step back behind the burros.

> We just hit our two-year mark and have successfully placed 109 burros.

Being 100 percent volunteer-and donor-driven, we are grateful for all the support we receive. We couldn't do it without our incredible community.

For more info, visit
burrobasecamp.com



TIPS FOR A FACADE UPGRADE

Written by **Bonnie Joffe** / Photography by **Getty Images**

Whether you're looking to refresh your exterior's appearance, add character, or create a more welcoming atmosphere, there are various ways to improve your home's overall look. Use the tips in this guide to help you elevate its curb appeal.

APPLY A FRESH COAT OF PAINT

Painting is one of the easiest ways to pump new life into your home's appearance. You can redo the entire exterior, add an accent color to the trim, or simply change its shade—any of which will make a big impact.

CHANGE THE FRONT DOOR

Besides painting it, you can swap out your door entirely. Your home's architectural style will likely influence your choice of replacement. Consider a contemporary design with larger glass panels, or select solid wood for a timeless, classic look.

ENHANCE THE WALKWAY

Even if your walkway is in good shape, you can rejuvenate its look. For instance, you can replenish the mulch, plant fresh shrubs, and add potted plants and vibrant flowers to boost its appeal significantly.

FIX THE DRIVEWAY

The driveway is a focal point of any property. If yours is cracked or discolored, resurfacing it, installing pavers, or adding stamped concrete can bring it back to life.

INCORPORATE WEATHER-RESISTANT ARTWORK

Add a touch of whimsy to your front yard with outdoor artwork. This could include elaborate pieces like water fountains or birdbaths or simpler features like metal agave art, garden figurines, or a decorative bench. To frame your landscape, you can even build or purchase a trellis adorned with vine-like plants and flowers.

INSTALL NEW SHUTTERS

There are various styles of shutters available for almost any type of home. If your current ones are outdated or in bad shape, you can improve your home's overall look by replacing them with modern ones. You can also enhance their appearance by adding a contrasting trim color.

PERK UP THE LIGHTING

Upgrade your exterior lighting to highlight your home's best features, which can be easily accomplished by installing low-voltage or solar lights along your front pathways or incorporating lanterns and chic sconces at your entryway.

PUT ON A NEW ROOF

If your roof is aging and showing signs of wear, replacing it with a new one can make a considerable difference in your home's appearance. There's a wide range of roof styles to choose from, so be sure to select one that pairs well with your home's architectural design.

REMODEL THE FRONT PORCH

Whether your porch is worn down or simply feels too bland, renovating it is a great way to ensure it's both functional and visually pleasing. Alternatively, if your roof is dated, you could have it replaced or add a front door awning for a more modest addition.

REPLACE OR REPAIR WORN PORCH RAILINGS

Don't overlook the visual impact—good or bad—that porch railings can bring to the front of your home. If yours show signs of wear, apply a fresh coat of paint or stain to revitalize them. However, if they are beyond repair, now may be the perfect time to consider replacing them.

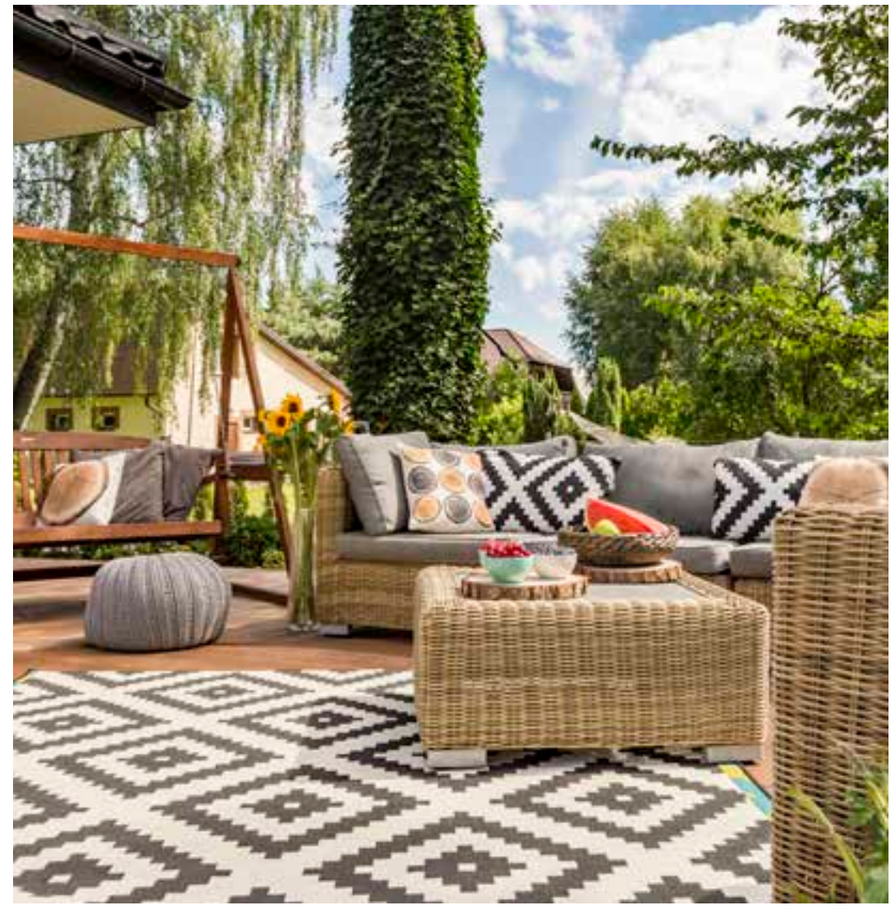
RESURFACE CONCRETE STEPS

Over time, weathering can cause concrete to deteriorate, resulting in cracks and holes that compromise both safety and visual appeal. Resurfacing can repair minor imperfections and create a smoother and more even surface. In addition, you can give your steps an extra special touch by painting them with a pop of color.

SWAP OUT OLD PLANTINGS FOR NEW ONES

Remove and replace unhealthy or dying plants to revamp your landscaping. Add diversity in terms of size, shape, color, and texture by incorporating elements like ornamental grass, low-growing plants that can function as ground cover, colorful perennials, and a mixture of shrubs and hedges.

Simple additions to your porch or front steps, such as weather-resistant furniture in accent colors, a decorative rug, and a selection of throw pillows, can create a vibrant curb appeal.



UPDATE THE WINDOWS

You may want to contemplate upgrading or modernizing your windows if they are old. When replacement isn't feasible, you can enhance their look by installing window grids to give them a contemporary and updated appearance.

UPGRADE THE GUTTERS

If your gutters are starting to sag, rust, or detach from your home, it could be a sign that it's time to replace them. Depending on your budget, you can install vinyl gutters or invest in copper ones, which not only offer greater longevity but also add a visually appealing touch to your property.

USE STYLISH DECOR

Simple additions to your porch or front steps, such as weather-resistant furniture in accent colors, a decorative rug, and a selection of throw pillows, can create a vibrant curb appeal. Moreover, minor updates like replacing the door handle, house number, and doorbell can further elevate the overall aesthetic of your entryway.

Improving your home's exterior doesn't always require a major renovation or spending a ton of money. With a little effort and imagination, you can transform it from eyesore to eye-pleasing.

the art of ICE CREAM

Interview with **Sindy Posso**
Written by **Matthew Brady**
Photography courtesy of
Cielito Artisan Pops

Sindy Posso, cofounder of South Florida's Cielito Artisan Pops, explains how she blends generational family recipes and fresh ingredients to make her business's popular, innovative treats.

Tell us a little about yourself and your business:

I am from Colombia, but I have been living in Miami for eighteen years. My husband, Ivan, and I have three kids. When I became a mom, I stopped working as an architect and started living a healthier lifestyle, which is why I came up with the idea of a healthy frozen-treat business.

My grandmother used to make ice cream back in Colombia, so I had all these old recipes to work from. I put my own twist on all-natural pops by making them very pretty and unique. We only use the best ingredients, such as fresh fruits and hormone-free dairy, so you're eating real food and getting the most delicious flavors. The greenery and flair within our three shops also reflect who I am and the food we make.

Starting a business can be challenging. Was it for you?

Oh my God, yes! We opened our first store in the Wynwood neighborhood in 2017, and Hurricane Irma hit a few days later. We went four days without electricity, so our first-ever production line completely melted. We had to come back and clean up the mess using our cell phones' flashlights. It was

Ivan and Sindy Posso

horrible. At first, I thought, "This is it; we're done." But when something like that happens, you actually get stronger. We just started over and kept going.

In July 2020, we opened our second location, in Boca Raton—right in the middle of the COVID outbreak. It was crazy because, once again, we didn't know what was going to happen to our business. But as it turned out, people wanted to get out of the house and have some fun, so they came to buy pops. We opened our third location in 2021 in Aventura Mall.

What's the meaning behind your business's name?

It actually has two meanings. In Spanish, *cielito* translates to "small heaven" or "small sky," but it also means "sweetheart," "my love," or "darling": something I would call my husband. So our take on it is more than just "little heaven"—but our pops *are* heavenly. [*Laughs*]

How do you go about making your pops?

There's a kitchen in our Wynwood shop, where we handcraft everything. Each day, our crew cuts the fruits and makes the base and the toppings. Since the original recipes were for ice cream, we needed to get creative to turn them into pops. Making them is an intense process, but it's worth it.

> In Spanish, *cielito* translates to "small heaven" or "small sky," but it also means "sweetheart," "my love," or "darling."

How many flavors do you have? How do you come up with such unique ones?

We always have around forty flavors in stock, and we rotate in four to six different ones every month. For those, Ivan and I always try to think outside the box; we get inspiration for new pop flavors from eating desserts when we travel and making ice-cream versions. For example, last summer, we went to Morocco and came back with ideas like caramelized olives and pistachios.

What are your most popular flavors? What is your favorite?

I have a couple. I love tart flavors, so our Tamarind and Key Lime Pie pops are two of my favorites. For the key lime one, we don't use any frozen or pasteurized juice; we zest and squeeze the limes daily for the freshest, most authentic flavor.

As far as customer favorites, there is a traditional meringue-based dessert called pavlova, and our pop version of it is one of our bestsellers. It's made with custard and even has fresh-made meringue.

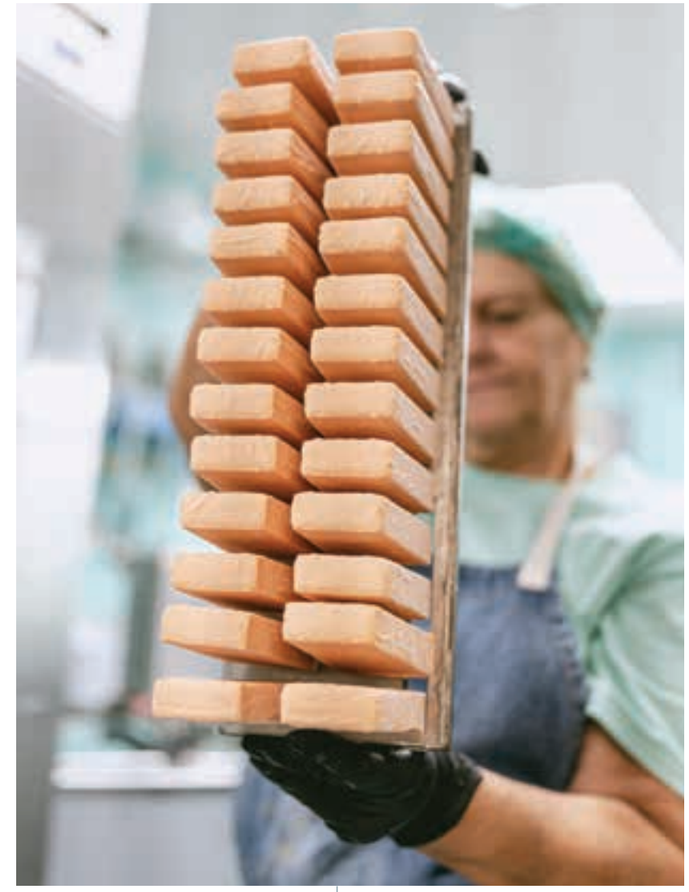
Besides dairy, nondairy, and vegan offerings, you also have dog-friendly ones. Tell us about them:

I'm a dog lover. I always told Ivan that if we did this business, we needed to welcome dogs and incorporate dog-friendly treats, which led to our PUPsicles. They're made without sugar; we use real fruit and honey instead for sweetness. Dogs *love* them. They actually recognize the black-and-white building stripes of our Wynwood shop and start going crazy in their cars when they get close. They're as excited as the customers are!

What does your Miami community mean to you?

I see this area as our forever home. We support locals as much as we can, especially

> We always have around forty flavors in stock, and we rotate in four to six different ones every month.



family businesses, because we know how hard it is to come up with an idea and make it happen. For example, when we opened the Wynwood shop, we asked local artists to help create a wall display of pops and sold their art in the shop. We also use local farmers' produce as much as we can.

> Making [our pops] is an intense process, but it's worth it.

How has it been working with your husband on this venture?

He's been very supportive since the beginning. When I had this idea, he told me to just go for it. A key to our success is the trust he has in me—it makes me feel secure and allows me to dream up all these wild flavors. He's a quiet, easygoing guy, and I'm a little bit crazy, so we work well together.

How would your grandmother feel about how many people are enjoying her recipes?

Her sister is still alive; she just turned ninety-four. In their business, she made the cakes and my grandmother the ice cream. So I've always talked to her about Cielito and shared our take on the recipes with her. She's impressed, so I'm sure my grandmother would be too.

For more info, visit
cielitoartisanpops.com

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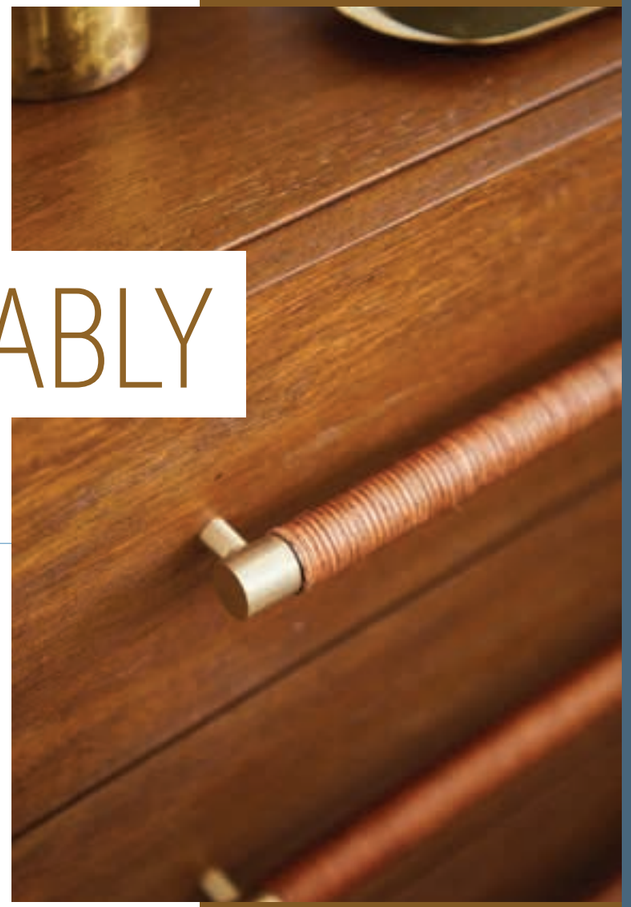
Interview with **Lina Galvão and Erin Coren**
Written by **Alexa Bricker**
Photography by **Jacob Snavely**



Family-focused design is front and center at Curated Nest, a full-service firm serving Connecticut and New York. Here its founders, **Lina Galvão** and **Erin Coren**, reveal how they renovated a Larchmont, New York, colonial home with fun and function in mind.

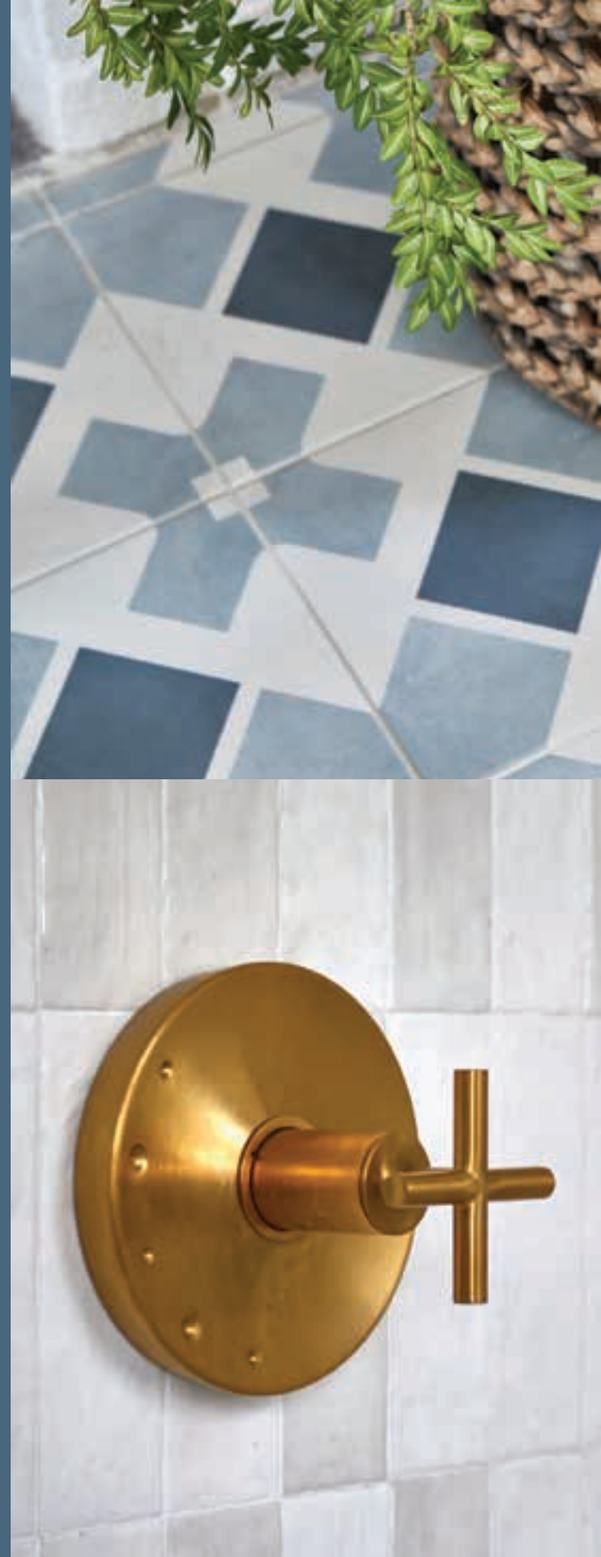
How did you discover your passion for interior design?

Erin: It's definitely been a lifelong passion for me. I remember when I was six, my mom would yell at me for rearranging all the furniture in my bedroom over and over. There was never any doubt about what I would do growing up. I went to school for interior design, trained under talented designers in Atlanta, and moved to New York City to start my own company.

Lina: Interior design is a second career for me after doing management consulting for about ten years. I felt a huge pull toward the creative arts, so I took a leap of faith and returned to school for interior design. I never looked back—I love the marriage of problem-solving and creativity inherent to design. I met Erin in Brooklyn shortly after we both became moms for the first time, and we instantly hit it off. Combining her extensive experience and my business background, we started Curated Nest together as a new venture.

What is your design philosophy, and how does it inform your client relationships?

Lina: Our specialty is livable luxury, with a focus on creating homes that deliver comfort, well-being, and, most importantly, a high degree of functionality to support modern families



We like to repeat certain elements in our palette of materials, such as light oaks, brass-and-gold tones, rust-and-blue tones, and black accents.

with busy lives. This philosophy has resonated beautifully with our clients. In fact, most people contact us *because* of it. Today's families want custom solutions that serve their unique needs, so we hammer home our mission in all points of the client relationship, from conception to installation.

You designed the Larchmont Colonial home for a family. What were their goals for the project?

Erin: This early 1900s home is in a charming area of downtown Larchmont with many other historic homes. It has three bedrooms, three and a half bathrooms, and three floors, including a spacious finished attic, but its layout was choppy due to previous remodels and the center hall structure typical of colonials. The kitchen was also dark and lacked counter space and storage. However, the living and dining rooms had ample space. Overall, the home's history gave it a lot of character.

Lina: The clients wanted a better layout overall to suit their needs of raising boisterous kids and entertaining frequently. Aesthetically, the husband loves leather, midcentury furniture, and bold colors while the wife prefers modern designs in light, airy neutral colors with copper- and rust-toned finishes, so we had to find a way to marry their two styles together.

There's a unifying element to each room in this project. What is your secret for achieving this without it feeling overly repetitive?

Lina: We like to repeat certain elements in our palette of materials, such as light oaks, brass-and-gold tones, rust-and-blue tones, and black accents. This creates a lovely rhythm and cohesion throughout a home. The secret to doing it right is using these colors and materials in different ways with a supporting background of various complementary neutrals. We used blue, for example, in the beautiful grass cloth wallpaper in the dining room, which offers a soft, organic, and soothing texture. In the same sight line, looking into the kitchen, you can see the range hood is also blue but in a bolder solid tone and, of course, a totally different texture. This keeps the repetition from being boring.

How did you go about selecting the perfect lighting for each space?

Erin: Lighting is critical because it provides so much bang for your design buck, and it can do many things: create a mood, add an interesting

sculptural element that "floats" in the air or on the wall like art, and serve as the jewelry of the space, like the accessory to the perfect outfit. We love using it to make a statement, as we did in the dining room, where the geometry of the chandelier is jarring against the natural lines of the table and wallpaper. It activates the space, drawing you in with how unexpected yet complementary it feels. In the bedroom, an intentionally relaxing room, we chose a more toned-down light fixture with soft curves.

The framed shower in the main bath gives the room such a stylized look. Do you think people are moving toward more unique and bold bathroom designs?

Lina: Absolutely. Shower enclosures are a major area where designers have gotten creative, and we've seen a lot of frames like this one in multiple configurations and styles, some even arched. One look we also love is floating vanities made of stone, which is a great way to incorporate natural textures. We made this primary bath unique to our client by creating a custom walnut vanity to tie in the desert tones in the bedroom, and we used the triangle tile to reflect the couple's personality—not too serious, whimsical, and full of energy.

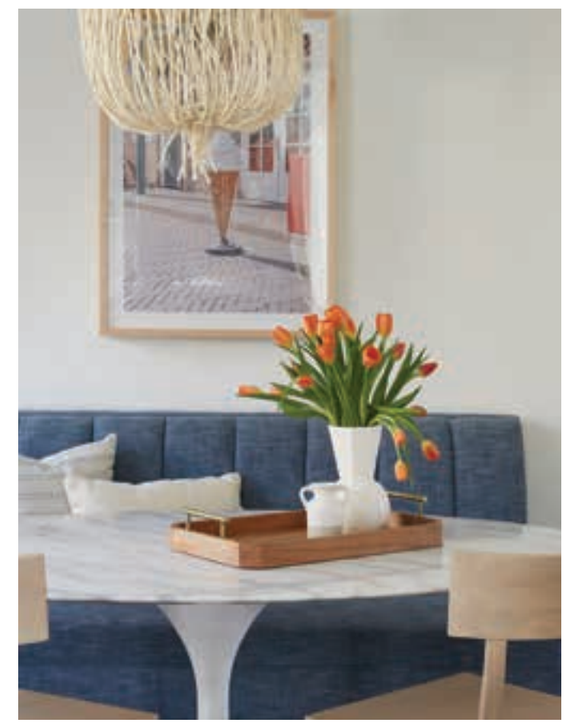
The children's elements seem to blend seamlessly with the rest of the home's design. How did you achieve this?

Erin: That's kind of our thing! Our goal is to create homes that really work for families, not the other way around. We added several clever storage solutions to handle clutter and toys in almost every room. We also created a dedicated playroom on the first floor, which is ideal for keeping larger and messier toys contained. The kids' furniture blends with the rest of the home's aesthetic and has a touch of midcentury modern with light-oak wood and tones of dark blue. When everything has its place for the adults and kiddos alike, we find that our clients use the functionality they have.

How do your personalities combine in your designs?

Lina: I like designing spaces that feel comfortable and easy to live in, like when you're in a five-star spa and everything is provided for. When designing a kitchen

> When designing a kitchen for a family of five, for example, the drawer, cabinet, and appliance layout should keep the kids in mind.



for a family of five, for example, the drawer, cabinet, and appliance layout should keep the kids in mind. We love including a beverage center for kids' snacks and drinks so they can access them easily without a parent. It's about function without the fuss.

Erin: Travel serves as a huge source of inspiration to me. I love experiencing other cultures, architecture, art, and nature. I just took a hiking trip to the Azores and experienced wildly different terrains that were so dramatic and breathtaking. I bring these adventures back with me and translate them into color palettes, shapes, and patterns in our designs. I've always been attracted to Moroccan motifs and am hoping to travel to Morocco in the near future.

What is your favorite design trend of the last few years? Which new design trend are you most excited about?

Erin: We've been loving the use of bold stone in kitchens, baths, and other spaces. Similar to the resurgence of wallpaper we saw in the last decade, stone adds color and visual texture and is timeless. If that price point is inaccessible, porcelain has come a long way in replicating the look of natural stone. We're seeing this trend continue in smaller pops with the use of exotic stone and bold marble as accents on furniture and lighting—we can't wait to see how this trend develops!

For more info, visit **curatednest.com**

a barbeque BONANZA

Recipes by **OSCAR SMITH**
Photography by **BILLY LAW**

SCAN TO BUY

RECIPES FROM *THE BBQ COMPANION: 50 RECIPE CARDS FOR GRILLING PERFECTION* BY OSCAR SMITH. SMITH STREET GIFT, 2023. PHOTOGRAPHY © BILLY LAW

BARBECUED CHICKEN BURGERS

with basil aioli

Serves 4

Preheat a barbecue hotplate to medium

INGREDIENTS

4 round wholemeal buns
1 avocado, mashed
1 cup rocket (arugula) leaves
1 large tomato, sliced

Chicken Burgers
1 lb. 2 oz. minced (ground) chicken
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
¼ cup basil leaves, torn
½ cup flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped
1 teaspoon chili flakes
1 teaspoon sea salt flakes
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
Zest and juice of 1 lemon
2 tablespoons dry breadcrumbs
1 egg, lightly beaten

Basil Aioli
8 oz. whole egg mayonnaise
½ cup basil leaves

INSTRUCTIONS

1/ Place the burger ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Mix well using your hands until you can see the herbs are evenly dispersed. Using wet hands, shape the mixture into patties slightly larger than the round of the buns. Place the patties on a plate lined with baking paper and cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 1 hour.

2/ To make the aioli, place the mayonnaise and basil into a small food processor and pulse until well combined and creamy. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Refrigerate until needed.

3/ Preheat a barbecue hotplate to medium and lightly grease with oil.

4/ Cook the burgers for about 4–5 minutes each side or until cooked through. Split the buns and place, cut-side down, on the hotplate to toast. Allow the buns to cool slightly before spreading avocado on the base of each bun, then top with rocket, a burger, a slice of tomato, a large dollop of aioli and the remaining bun halves.

SOUTHERN-STYLE
baby back ribs

Serves 4

Preheat a hooded barbecue grill to low heat

Cook sauce over low heat for 20–25 minutes

INGREDIENTS

3 lb. 5 oz. pork baby back ribs, cut into racks of 4 ribs each

Dry Rub

2 tablespoons sea salt flakes
1½ tablespoons sweet paprika
2 teaspoons smoked paprika
2 teaspoons garlic powder
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon celery salt
1 teaspoon chili flakes

Barbecue Sauce

½ red onion, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
2 tablespoons soft brown sugar
1 teaspoon sweet paprika
½ teaspoon smoked paprika
½ cup tomato ketchup
¼ cup cider vinegar
¼ cup pure maple syrup

INSTRUCTIONS

1/ Preheat a hooded barbecue grill to low heat.

2/ To make the dry rub, combine the ingredients in a small bowl. Coat the ribs in the dry rub, then wrap in foil. Place 2–3 racks in each foil package for easy handling. Place the foil packs onto the grill and cover. Cook for 2 hours, turning every 30 minutes.

3/ Meanwhile, to make the barbecue sauce, combine the ingredients in a small saucepan with 1 cup water. Cook over low heat for 20–25 minutes until thick. Reserve half the sauce for serving.

4/ Remove the foil packages from the grill. Increase the heat to medium and lightly grease with oil. Carefully unwrap the ribs and discard the foil. Brush the ribs all over with the remaining barbecue sauce and return to the grill. Cook, basting and turning regularly, for 30 minutes, until the ribs are browned and sticky, caramelized and charred.

5/ Pile the ribs onto a serving platter and serve with the reserved barbecue sauce.

SPICY CORN, BACON
& kale salad

Serves 4 as a side

Cook bacon over medium–high heat for 6–8 minutes

Preheat barbecue grill to medium

Blend the salad dressing

INGREDIENTS

4 slices middle bacon, rind removed
2 corn cobs, husks removed
Olive oil, for brushing
6–8 curly kale leaves, stems removed and leaves shredded
9 oz. mixed cherry tomatoes, halved
2 avocados, cut into thick slices
4 spring onions (scallions), finely chopped
½ jalapeño chili, deseeded and thinly sliced
Toasted pepitas, to serve

Tangy Lime Dressing

1 large egg yolk
⅓ cup lime juice
1 cup coriander (cilantro) leaves
2 teaspoons honey
½ jalapeño chili, deseeded and thinly sliced
½ cup olive oil
¼ cup vegetable oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1/ Cook the bacon in a non-stick frying pan over medium–high heat for 6–8 minutes, turning occasionally until browned and crisp. Transfer to a chopping board and cut into pieces.

2/ Preheat a barbecue grill to medium. Brush the corn with a little oil and cook on all sides until just charred and the kernels are tender. Remove, cool and cut off the kernels.

3/ Combine the kale, tomato, avocado, corn, spring onion and chili in a large salad bowl.

4/ Except for the oils, place the dressing ingredients in a small food processor and blend well. Combine the oils in a jug. With the motor running, pour in the oils in a slow steady stream until the mixture has thickened. If the dressing is too thick, just add a small amount of warm water. Season to taste.

5/ Lightly toss the salad ingredients with the dressing, scattering the bacon pieces and toasted pepitas over the top.

FISH TACOS
with chipotle sauce

Serves 4–6

Blend the Chipotle sauce

Preheat a barbecue hotplate to medium-high

INGREDIENTS

2 cups coriander (cilantro) leaves, roughly chopped
1 white onion, very finely chopped
2 lb. 3 oz. firm white fish, cut into long chunks
Olive oil, for brushing
12 corn tortillas
¼ green cabbage, finely shredded
6 radishes, thinly shaved
3 limes, cut into wedges

Chipotle Sauce

½ cup whole egg mayonnaise
½ cup Greek-style yogurt
1 small chipotle chili in adobo sauce, plus 1 teaspoon of sauce
½ teaspoon dried oregano
1 tablespoon chopped dill
Zest and juice of 1 lime

Spice Mix

1 teaspoon paprika
½ teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
½ teaspoon dried oregano
½ teaspoon sea salt flakes

INSTRUCTIONS

1/ To make the chipotle sauce, place the ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. Transfer to a serving bowl and season to taste. Combine the coriander and onion in a separate bowl.

2/ Preheat a barbecue hotplate to medium–high and lightly grease with oil.

3/ Combine the spice mix ingredients in a small bowl. Pat the fish dry with paper towel, then brush with olive oil and sprinkle with the spice mix. Cover and refrigerate for 10 minutes, then cook the fish, turning once, for approximately 2 minutes on each side until just cooked through. Toast the tortillas on the hotplate or grill for about 30 seconds until lightly charred.

4/ Serve the fish with the tortillas, sauce, coriander and onion, cabbage, radishes and lime wedges.

CURL UP AT THESE **CAT CAFÉS**

Written by **Andre Rios**
Photography by **Getty Images unless noted**

Ordinary coffee shops invite you in for a warm beverage and offer a comforting setting to read, converse, or enjoy entertainment like live music. But there are a series of locales littered throughout the nation that up the charm and cute quotient to another level: cat cafés. These spots invite you to relax beside a feline companion and try their alluring approach to the lounge lifestyle—and, once the caffeine hits, you can play alongside the active kitties as you both fall prey to sudden "zoomie" energy.

But such cafés are more than just recreational, even if the leisurely calico purring on your lap may disagree. They welcome you to play with adoptable pets in the hope that you fall helplessly in love with one and give them a forever home. Stir in this humanitarian (cat-itarian?) appeal with delicious beverages and an irresistibly pleasant atmosphere, and you have a heartwarming combination that you may find addictive after just one visit. If you have yet to see the allure of a cat café, consider a stop at one of these welcoming places.

Photo by the Cat Café

THE CAT CAFÉ
SAN DIEGO, CA

As trendy Southern California's first feline lounge, the Cat Café welcomes visitors to enjoy its award-winning, locally sourced food and drinks and consort with ten to twelve adoptable cats. The charming lounge offers comfortable seating nestled among cat trees, agility tunnels, wall-mounted alcoves, and other niches where acrobatic kitties caper about.

As you enter, be sure to introduce yourself to the café's famous permanent residents, fourteen-year-old Jacey and twelve-year-old Leo. These Bengal cats have grown accustomed to socializing with a rotating crowd of cat and human companions. "Visitors who return to see us are always happy to see these two," says café general manager Tony Wang. But this refuge and its Bengals happily welcome first-time patrons too. "Many of our out-of-town visitors, despite having a cat café where they live, never stopped into one until they visited us," Wang states. Reservations are required, so be sure to book tickets well in advance—space is limited, and seats fill up quickly.

For more info, visit
catcafesd.com

Photo by the Cat Café

PURRFECTO CAT LOUNGE
AUSTIN, TX

A self-proclaimed "five-star luxury hotel for rescue cats," Perrfecto was founded in July 2022 to not only fill the gap left by overcapacity animal shelters but also resolve the sheer lack of kitty cafés in its community. By combining a relaxing ambience, a selection of beverages by Irie Bean Coffee, and a straightforward rescue-adoption process, Purrfecto Cat Lounge immediately made an impact: in just one year in business, it has proudly helped five hundred cats find forever homes and currently averages one adoption per day. Locals and tourists alike have fallen for the uncontained cuteness of its temporary residents, which include felines of various breeds, ages, and sizes.

Recline in the luxe, white-and-lavender atmosphere as you await a curious visitor to curl up by your seat (as the café counsels, "The cat chooses you, and you choose them. It's like speed dating for cats."), or partake in café events such as "Paws and Paintbrushes" craft sessions. Even the cat-contrary or feline-phobic could find something here to adore. As café owner Lupita Adams says, "We challenge you to leave here unchanged!"

Keep an eye out for their new San Antonio location too.

For more info, visit **purrfectocatlounge.com**

Photo by Purrfecto Cat Lounge

Photo by Purrfecto Cat Lounge

Photo by Purrfecto Cat Lounge

CRUMBS & WHISKERS
WASHINGTON, DC, AND LOS ANGELES, CA

In DC's youthful Georgetown neighborhood sits a capital for all things cat. Crumbs & Whiskers is a popular institution not only for its friendly felines hopping from shelf to shelf but also for its chic underground setting featuring elegant faux-fur seats and a vertical garden. (How it manages to maintain this decor with so many cats around is a mystery.)

Guests who wish to become part of the excitement are encouraged to lie back on the cozy play-area rugs, where cats may leap across them or curiously survey them from the zigzagging perches just above. And, should you fall in love with a kitty, Crumbs & Whiskers has a streamlined adoption process so you can apply to take home your perfect playmate.

Before you visit, check out the café's "Cat of the Week" post online to learn more about a special resident's history, breed, age, and behavioral quirks. (Capitano, for one, has a habit of yelling at employees to get their attention.) West Coast cat lovers are also encouraged to visit Crumbs & Whiskers' Los Angeles location, which has become something of a stomping ground for both cats and celebrities. Due to the hype, though, tickets may sell out well in advance.

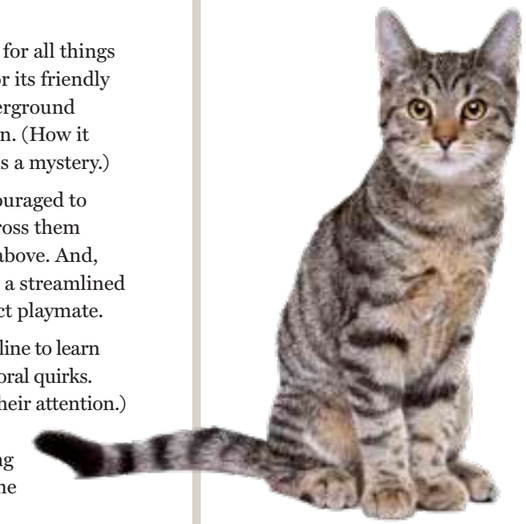
For more info, visit **crumbsandwhiskers.com**

THE CATCADE
CHICAGO, IL

This café, rescue, arcade, and lounge seamlessly combines two of the most invigorating activities known to humankind: playing classic games and playing with cats. In its sleek and stylish amusement space, colorful felines stand out like moving decor as they hop across gaming machinery. With so much stimulation, guests are encouraged to embrace the feline spirit and just do as they please. "Bring your laptop to do a little work on our free Wi-Fi, sign up for our cat yoga sessions, or just sit around with a cat on your lap and play free-play arcade games," the Catcade says on its website. As the wall art reminds us, "Time spent with cats is never wasted."

This nonprofit's mission is to provide a more relaxing, comfortable, and attentive alternative to resource-strapped animal shelters, and it has successfully operated as a recreational rescue program for hundreds of cats. Shop owners Chris Gutierrez and Shelly Casey encourage customers to pop by the playpen regularly to bond with the temporary occupants, but don't be surprised if each encounter with a resident is your only one; cats average only thirty-nine days at the Catcade before being taken in by new owners.

For more info, visit **thecatcade.org**



Each of the preceding cafés, as well as shops near your own town, may tempt you in for several reasons, whether you're looking for an adoptable companion or simply want to while away the day with some of nature's greatest experts at rest and relaxation. Curl up with your beverage of choice, soak up the purring populace at play, snap photos of their irresistible cuteness, and marvel at their complex personalities that waver between secretive solitude and loving affection for human companions. If you're planning your first visit, be prepared to pencil in a regular return one; your first patronage probably won't be your last.

NEW RIVER GORGE: *A New National Park*

Written by **Lauren Kim** / Photography **as noted**

Diamond Point Overlook on the Endless Wall Trail: Photography by Gary Hartley

Nestled in the Appalachian Mountains in southern West Virginia lies New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, which became America's sixty-third national park in 2020.

The densely forested attraction encompasses more than 72,000 acres along fifty-three miles of the New River, a waterway that has been coursing through North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia for an estimated sixty-five million years. Featuring peaks reaching almost 3,300 feet, New River Gorge is a vacationers' playground that offers many activities for nature enthusiasts and sightseers alike. And, if that isn't enough, you can visit the several historical sites within the area and shop and dine in nearby idyllic small towns.

See the sights

Make your way to the Canyon Rim Visitor Center, and stroll along its wooden boardwalk; the two observation decks offer jaw-dropping views of the New River Gorge Bridge, which towers a staggering 876 feet above the river and is the longest single-span steel-arch bridge in the country. You can also peruse the center's exhibits and bookstore and treat yourself to a souvenir or two.

Once you've got your fill of the center, hop in your car for a drive on winding Fayette Station Road to the bottom of the gorge and then up the other side for amazing river and bridge scenery. There are many waterfalls throughout the park, and its most spectacular, the 1,500-foot-wide Sandstone Falls, is also accessible by car. Stop at the Sandstone Falls Overlook for a panoramic photo opportunity, or get a closer view from the locale's boardwalk, which offers several observation decks.

Forest Ecosystem: Photography by Louise McLaughlin

Bridge Day: Photography by KeithDoherty

Bridge Day: Photography by Jayden Adkins

Endless Wall Trail: Photography by John Chapman

There are also trails for hikers of all abilities; some of the best include the Endless Wall Trail for soaring vistas and the Long Point Trail to get a closer peek at the bridge. And if you like staring at the skies, there are plenty of optimal viewing areas for sunrises, sunsets, and stargazing.

Glimpse wildlife

New River Gorge boasts one of the most biodiverse forests on earth. More than 180 bird species can be found here, including songbirds, hummingbirds, golden eagles, and peregrine falcons. Numerous butterfly species flit among the wildflowers, and various mammals like opossums and even black bears make their homes in the forest. You can also spot all sorts of amphibians and reptiles if you watch closely enough.

Be adventurous

For a daring jaunt, walk the entire span of New River Gorge Bridge's underbelly on its two-foot-wide catwalk. (If peering at the river hundreds of feet below makes your heart pound, don't worry—a safety harness protects you.) You can snap photos

during your walk, and a shuttle will drive you back across the river after you've completed the trek. Or visit in October for Bridge Day, when the most daring individuals are permitted to BASE jump from the bridge, drawing thousands of spectators.

There are plenty of other exciting activities in and around the river, including fishing, mountain biking, rock climbing, rappelling, white water rafting, and hiking. For an adrenaline-fueled tour on the New River, drive north to Hawk's Nest State Park for a thirty-minute jet-boat tour that will take you underneath the bridge and back again.

Brush up on history

History buffs may want to delve into the park's coal-mining past.

Box Turtle: Photography by Shannon Welch

Peregrine Falcon: Photography by Gary Hartley

Sandstone Falls: Photography by Louise McLaughlin

You can use the National Park Service app to embark on a self-guided African American Heritage Driving Tour, which includes stops at seventeen sites in and around the park where you can learn about the lives of the region's Black coal miners and rail workers. Or follow the app's tour of the nearby Thurmond ghost town, once a bustling railroad community dating back to the late nineteenth century. Stroll the streets to view its old homes and church, visit the rail station (now a visitor's center) and still-active train line, and cross the river on the Thurmond Bridge.

Explore small towns

While Thurmond may be abandoned, there are many other thriving towns in the area.

After getting a taste of history, check out Hinton on the southern end of the park, where you can catch a show at the historic Ritz Theatre, enjoy a meal on the river from Kirk's outdoor restaurant patio, or shop for clothing and home goods at Otter & Oak. Or head southwest of the New River Gorge Bridge to Fayetteville. This picturesque small town offers fine shops, delicious eateries like Pies & Pints and the Cathedral Cafe (housed in an old church), and beautiful historic buildings, including its prominent redbrick courthouse.

Cathedral Cafe: Photography by Ryan Persinger

If you go

The accommodations here are as varied as the activities. You can book a room at one of the many hotels in the area or relax in a rented cabin, tree house, or tiny home. If you like to camp, stay for free at any of the park's eight primitive campgrounds or reserve a campground outside the park, many of which come with full RV hookups.

New River Gorge is open twenty-four hours a day year-round, and it's free to visit, unlike many national parks. However, now that the secret is out about this stunning locale, it may be bursting with visitors early this summer. So you might want to postpone your trip until the latter half of August, when crowds may be lighter as students return to school, or mid-October, when there will be even fewer crowds and fantastic foliage to boot.

Otter & Oak: Photo courtesy of Otter & Oak

For more info, visit **nps.gov/neri**

AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

CONTENTS

ISSUE 129

Each issue is filled with el-good content that engages your audience and makes 0 percent of recipients more kely to do business with you.

02 Welcoming a New Pet

04 Beauty of the Burros

10 Tips for a Facade Upgrade

14 The Art of Ice Cream

20 Comfortably Curated

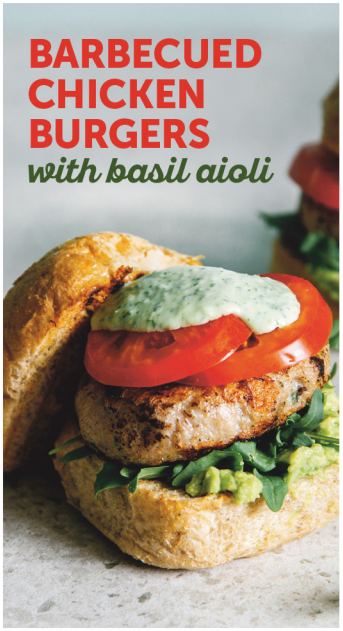
28 A Barbeque Bonanza

36 Curl Up at These Cat Cafés

42 New River Gorge: A New National Park

48 A Pet's Tale

Front of Tear Out Card 2



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Back of Tear Out Card 2

SERVES 4

BARBECUED CHICKEN BURGERS *with basil aioli*

INGREDIENTS

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Recipes from ***The BBQ Companion: 50 Recipe Cards for Grilling Perfection*** by Oscar Smith. Smith Street Gift, 2023. Photography © Billy Law

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