

THE
REAL ESTATE & LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

Compliments of Stacey Shanner

ISSUE 09

**HOLIDAY
PREP
COUNTDOWN**



Stacey Shanner
REALTOR®

**WHAT'S YOUR HOME
REALLY WORTH?**

HS | **HOMESERVICES**
OF AMERICA

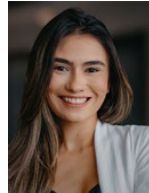
**SCAN TO SEE
YOUR ESTIMATED
HOME VALUE!**



Front of Tear Out Card 1



HS | **HOMESERVICES**
OF AMERICA



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Back of Tear Out Card 1



Stay in your price range

It can be fun to peruse different vacation properties and their various luxuries, dreaming about savoring their priceless views. However, doing so can often lead to unrealistic expectations. Instead, establish a budget and stick to it throughout the search process, only looking at homes you can afford.

Know the area

Buying a home—particularly a vacation home—in a town you've never been can be a risky endeavor. Make sure you're familiar with the area rather than buying a house under the assumption you'll love it. Try renting a local home a few times so you can have a chance to explore and see if the location's right.

Do your research

If you plan on renting out your property, research the rules on the venture so you can be sure to comply with any state and county regulations (homeowners association, city boards, etc.). Connect with an agent who knows the market well and can guide you in the right direction.



THE REAL ESTATE & LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

Dear Bill and Judy

When the holiday season arrives every year, there’s a certain warmth that comes with it, a gentle anticipation of cozy evenings brightened by the glow of firelight and glimmering, sparkling decorations. Like magic, laughter and music ring out from every corner, reverberating with the infinite joy of home.

Our latest edition of The Real Estate and Lifestyle Magazine captures that seasonal magic in words and pictures on the page. Each article included in this issue abounds with holiday cheer—comfort food recipes, DIY decorating, tips for hosting and entertaining, energy-efficient upgrades for wintertime, and more.

With a cup of hot cocoa in hand, enjoy this publication, a reminder that during the holidays, there’s no better gift than home.

If you’d like to talk about opportunities for buyers and sellers in our local market right now, please get in touch to schedule your complimentary real estate consultation.

Happy reading and happy holidays!

Stacey Shanner



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CREATING A CALMING HOME

Written by **DAN O'BRIEN**

The holidays have a way of piling on quickly. What begins as comfort can quietly tip into chaos, and a home that once felt hospitable starts to feel tight and noisy.

When your home feels this way, it can be anything but calming. A big cause? The place being overfull, which keeps everyone, including guests, slightly on edge. In contrast, a truly soothing home invites people to settle in. The good news is that there's a simple solution. Decluttering can help you set the stage for more joy in the season.

WHAT THE OBJECTIVE IS

This isn't spring-cleaning in disguise. The goal is restraint: doing a light pass by focusing only on what is visible and most used during the season. (Think of it as making room, not organizing everything.) And it can make all the difference between an enjoyable ambience and a fussy one.

WHERE IT MATTERS MOST

First impressions carry extra weight during the holidays because they set the tone. Shoes, coats, bags,

and mail accumulate fast, so clearing your entryway helps immediately, providing a welcoming environment from the moment your guests arrive.

The same is true for shared surfaces. When tables and counters are less crowded, seasonal decor has room to exist without competing for attention, creating a sense of visual calm. To achieve this, keep only one statement item on each small surface (like an end table) and up to three on a larger one (like a kitchen island) to ease your everyday routine and improve aesthetics. You'll quickly find that your spaces can support rest, gathering, and spontaneity rather than resisting them.

Clearing space shifts the season from frantic back to festive. It's an act of care for yourself and for the people you welcome in. The reward is a place that feels lighter, quieter, and ready for what the season brings.



HOLIDAY PREP COUNTDOWN

Written by **LAUREN KIM**

Are you having guests over for Thanksgiving or another holiday meal? This handy guide will help you get your home prepped and your turkey, sides, and desserts on the table with as little stress as possible.

FOUR WEEKS AHEAD

You'll find that hosting the holiday will be easier if you start planning at least a month before the big day. The more you can get done in advance, the less you'll need to do when the get-together is near. Start with these tasks:

- Draw up your guest list, and send out invites.
- Plan your menu, and write your shopping list.
- Research where to order your meal if you prefer a prepared holiday spread.
- Assemble your decor, cutlery, plates, and napkins.
- Make and freeze your cookie and pie dough.

THREE WEEKS AHEAD

If you are hosting a potluck for your holiday meal, reach out to your guests to determine who will be bringing the main dish, side dishes, and desserts. Give your home's kitchen, entertaining areas, and guest bedroom and bathroom a deep clean.



TWO WEEKS AHEAD

Shop for nonperishables and frozen foods, such as canned vegetables, jarred condiments, pasta, rice, frozen rolls, coffee, tea, and other beverages. Make room in your fridge and freezer for the main meal, and ensure that you have containers for leftovers.

ONE WEEK AHEAD

Buy your turkey if you'll be purchasing a frozen one, and defrost it in your refrigerator. A four-to-twelve-pound turkey will need one to three days to thaw out, and a twelve-to sixteen-pound turkey will require at least four days.

FIVE DAYS BEFORE

Defrost your pie and cookie dough in the fridge.

THREE DAYS BEFORE

Buy perishable foods, such as fresh vegetables and fruit, herbs, eggs, and milk. Make your cranberry sauce, and prepare homemade stock for sides like stuffing and gravy. Store them in the refrigerator until the day of the get-together.

TWO DAYS BEFORE

If you'll be preparing a fresh turkey, purchase it today. Prepare casserole dishes. Bake pies and cookies. Buy ice for beverages. Do a light cleaning of your house.

ONE DAY BEFORE

Chop fresh celery, onions, and other vegetables for your stuffing and side dishes, and store them in the refrigerator. Prepare appetizers like deviled eggs and cheese balls. Cube and toast bread for stuffing, and store at room temperature. Chill your drinks, set your dining table, and ensure your home is ready for entertaining.

DAY OF GET-TOGETHER

Roast your turkey. You'll need about one hour for every four pounds. Make your potatoes, gravy, and stuffing. Heat up your casserole dishes. Set out your meal, and enjoy!

FESTIVE TABLESCAPES *MADE EASY*

Written by **ALLISON GOMES**

Your dining table undoubtedly shines during formal feasts, when it's filled with tempting platters and surrounded by good company. But on an average day? It might look a little uninspired. That's where the concept of the tablescape comes in. More than just decorations, a tablescape is an artfully arranged combination of centerpieces, tableware, and accents that sets the perfect festive mood. And the best part is that it doesn't require expensive pieces or elaborate setups. With just a few small touches, you can create a warm, inviting holiday table that's sure to impress.



LAY A BASE

When designing your setting, start with a table runner featuring a print, pattern, or color that speaks to you, and lay a strand of faux or fresh garland on top. It's a simple way to add texture and dimension to your design, forming a solid foundation that you can then build upon.

CRAFT A CENTERPIECE

You can easily throw together a stunning centerpiece by buying a pretty basket or bowl (or repurposing one you already have) and filling it with holiday-themed items such as pinecones, ornaments, and dried orange slices. For a little sparkle, you could even mix in a strand of battery-powered fairy lights. It doesn't have to be overly complicated or ornate since it won't be the only decorative feature adorning the table.



HOLIDAY-THEMED ITEMS SUCH AS PINECONES, ORNAMENTS, AND DRIED ORANGE SLICES ARE GREAT ADDITIONS TO ANY CENTERPIECE.

PLACE CANDLES

Speaking of lights, candles are a great way to lend warmth and ambience. Select a mix of tea lights and pillar candles in varying heights, and scatter them down your runner for an effortlessly chic look. If you're concerned about open flames, opt for battery-operated versions that flicker in close resemblance to the real thing.

EMBRACE ECLECTIC PLACE SETTINGS

With the center of your table established, you can now move on to place settings. The traditional mode of thought is that you need matching fine china to be appropriately fancy, but a mix of different chargers, plates, bowls, and glasses in complementary colors can lend an equally charming collected-over-time look. Complete the design with coordinating cloth napkins and silverware for each person; if you don't already have a nice set of the latter, it may be worth investing in a quality one to use for special occasions.

You can often find beautiful dishware for low prices at thrift stores and antique malls. When shopping, stick to a color scheme, like classic red and gold or elegant silver and blue, to keep everything cohesive. Also, small details can make a big impact. Try tying a piece of twine around a folded napkin and tucking in a sprig of rosemary or a cinnamon stick for a natural, rustic touch.



KEEP IT FUNCTIONAL

While it's fun to put together a festive display, make sure not to go overboard. You'll want to leave enough space for serving dishes and platters, especially if you're hosting large groups this season, and keep your centerpiece low and arrangements compact at a sit-down dinner so guests can easily see and talk to each other across the table. You could also opt out of using chargers to ensure guests have enough room to comfortably rest their arms while dining.

Remember, the best part about a tablescape is that it doesn't have to be perfect. It's about creating something festive and unique to your home. Take your time shopping to find pieces that make you happy, and you're sure to craft a holiday table that brings joy day in and day out.



SEVEN ESSENTIAL HOME ENERGY UPGRADES

Written by
ANDRE RIOS

As technology changes, our homes often do as well. For example, modern houses are now being equipped with an array of energy-efficient technologies, so how well are you keeping up? Implement the following simple upgrades, and you'll utilize some of the most powerful, environmentally friendly, and cost-cutting solutions out there today.

LED BULBS

Start with a simple yet essential swap. Hunt down any incandescent bulbs throughout your home and replace them with LED ones, which not only consume less power (about a fifth as much) but also last longer on average. For added efficiency, install timers, dimmers, or sensors in both indoor and outdoor areas to limit overuse. You can even find smart bulbs that are compatible with your phone or smart hub, allowing you to voice-activate them and set up low-use modes like "Ambient evening" and "Reading light only."

SOLAR LIGHTING

Outdoor lighting features could be some of the most helpful tech you install, and they don't have to draw from your home's electric current to operate. Swapping to solar lights can save you money because they're essentially self-sustaining illuminators that never need to be plugged in. Some types offer even more benefits, such as water resistance, motion detection, and shatterproof bulbs.

HVAC TUNE-UPS

These preventative services can help keep some of your home's most energy-sucking components in top shape. By checking for potential issues, doing cleanings, and testing mechanical performance, technicians can help promote the most efficient cooling and heating possible. Spring is an ideal time to request a service because it can help prepare you for the hot months ahead, but be sure to make an autumn appointment as well for help with winterization.

SMART THERMOSTAT APP

Upgrading your HVAC control unit offers a variety of benefits, not the least of which may be compatibility with a smartphone app. The Sensi app, for example, which works with thermostats of the same brand, enables you to regulate the temperature settings while you're away, build detailed heating and cooling schedules based on your routine, and even track your energy use in real time so you can ascertain periods of overuse and take corrective steps to save money.

INSULATION

Instead of solely turning to your thermostat to enhance indoor comfort, though, evaluate how well insulated your home is. An insulation professional can identify any potential faults in your current protection, which may include temperature variations by room or heat escaping through your attic, and then suggest upgrades. These changes can significantly lower your energy bills by reducing heat transfer. In fact, according to the EPA, homeowners can save an average of 15 percent on heating and cooling costs by sealing air leaks and adding insulation. And because unprotected areas, like your basement, attic, and garage, can get the chill and bring it indoors, insulating them can provide supplementary savings.



SMART PLUGS

For a quick, simple DIY upgrade, install this equipment virtually anywhere you plug in at least two electronic devices. More than just handy forms of protection against electricity currents (like their older cousin, the surge protector), smart plugs can help eliminate phantom power, whereby idle electronic devices such as TVs and set-top boxes continue using energy, needlessly adding to your utility costs. Addressing this problem can potentially save you up to \$200 per year. For even greater control over your utility usage, opt for a version that can detect energy use, identify major power drains, and even flip on and off in response to your vocal commands.



ENERGY AUDIT

Did you know that professional energy assessors may be available from your local government or utility company? Book an expert to thoroughly review your property, identify wasteful features, and recommend personalized efficiency upgrades. You can even talk to them about other smart swaps in this guide to determine how else you can make a major difference for the environment while saving serious money.



A NATURAL APPROACH TO WINTER SCENTS

Written by **LAUREN KIM**

The holiday season brings to mind enchanting aromas—think freshly baked cookies, spiced apple cider, and crisp evergreens. While store-bought fragrances and candles can quickly bring these delightful notes into your home, some may also increase indoor pollution and pose health risks, such as by irritating your respiratory system. The good news is that there are plenty of other techniques you can use to infuse your spaces with wonderful natural scents and create a cozy atmosphere.

► CREATE A SIMMER POT

Is there anything better than the richness of a delicious meal filling the air as it cooks? You can get similar results with seasonal smells by simmering a potpourri of various ingredients in water, either in a large pot on the stove or in a slow cooker. The first step is picking your combination of fruits, spices, and herbs. A classic option is orange slices, cinnamon sticks, and whole cloves, or you can go more woody with fresh pine needles, pear slices, and sprigs of rosemary. A good ratio is one whole fruit per eight cups of water and the equivalent (or slightly less) of the other items, depending on how strong you want the pot to be.

When ready to start, fill your cooking vessel three-quarters full with water, add your ingredients, and bring everything to a boil. Then reduce the heat to low, checking occasionally and adding more water as needed; you'll want to keep the pot at least half full to prevent scorching or a fire hazard. Maintain it carefully, and you're sure to enjoy its comforting scent for hours on end.

► HANG GARLANDS

Draping natural garlands in your home can lend not only a traditional touch but also a fresh, festive fragrance. For example, fir, pine, and spruce needles release woody notes that evoke the season's warmth, making them perfect choices to use as decor. You can forage for branches in your backyard or ask for leftover boughs at a local evergreen lot—many give them away for free. Once you have enough, tie their lengths together with floral wire, wearing thick gloves to protect your hands from their sharp needles and sap. To get your ideal look, shape the edges with scissors and add decorative elements like holly leaves and berries. The finished creation will make for a beautiful focal point along a banister, fireplace mantel, or wherever else you prefer.

Another equally charming option is to create a decorative chain of dried oranges to perfume the air with a sweet, citrusy smell. To begin, slice the fruit no more than a quarter-inch thick—otherwise, they'll take much longer to dehydrate. Place the slices on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, and bake them in the oven at 200°F for about three hours or until they're completely dry, flipping them every thirty minutes. Make sure to let them cool before working with them.

Next, cut several four-inch lengths of twine, enough for every slice, as well as a longer strand to attach them to. Poke a hole with a toothpick through the flesh just below the rind of each slice, thread a short piece of twine through it, and knot the ends. The last step is to tie them onto the longer twine, spacing them out evenly and as close or as far as together as you'd like. Hang your garland in a highly visible spot, such as across a doorway or draped around your Christmas tree, so friends and family can fully appreciate its fragrance and beauty.



► CRAFT A WREATH

Alternatively, you can use those dried oranges to make a holiday wreath for your door or wall. All you need is a hot glue gun and a bamboo or wooden floral hoop. Start by applying a drop of the adhesive to the surface, then firmly press a slice on it. Continue adding more in the same fashion, allowing them to overlap slightly, until your form is totally covered. Finish by adding a festive ribbon at the top to serve as a hanger and offer an extra touch of decoration.

For a softer scent than citrus, consider utilizing natural branches of eucalyptus as your base instead, bending them around a circular wire frame and attaching them with twine or floral wire. Tuck in some bay leaves or rosemary sprigs for an herbal, woody note, and the end result will smell like the fresh air of a winter forest.

A bonus to any of these fragrant crafts is the opportunity they provide to spend quality time with loved ones putting them together. Try one this season, and it may turn into a wonderful tradition you'll enjoy for years to come.

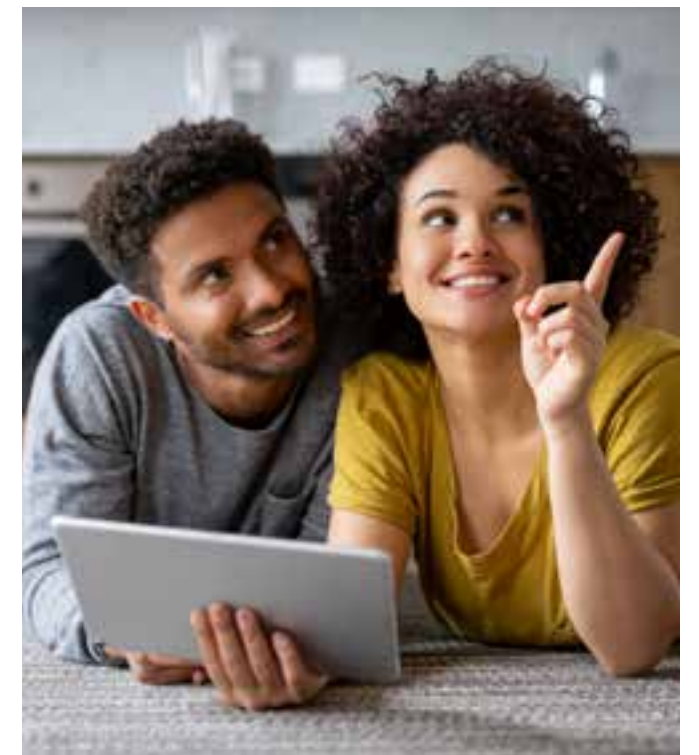
Use dried oranges to make a holiday wreath for your door or wall. All you need is a hot glue gun and a bamboo or wooden floral hoop.



COLOR-CONSCIOUS DECORATING

Written by **ANDRE RIOS**

It's visually striking when colors work well together. After all, few things look better than a forest-green pillow on a sienna armchair. Believe it or not, there's a complex science behind color concord, even if it's something that seems purely subjective. In other words, our eyes can detect when a room has a pleasing palette, even if we're unsure *why* it just works.



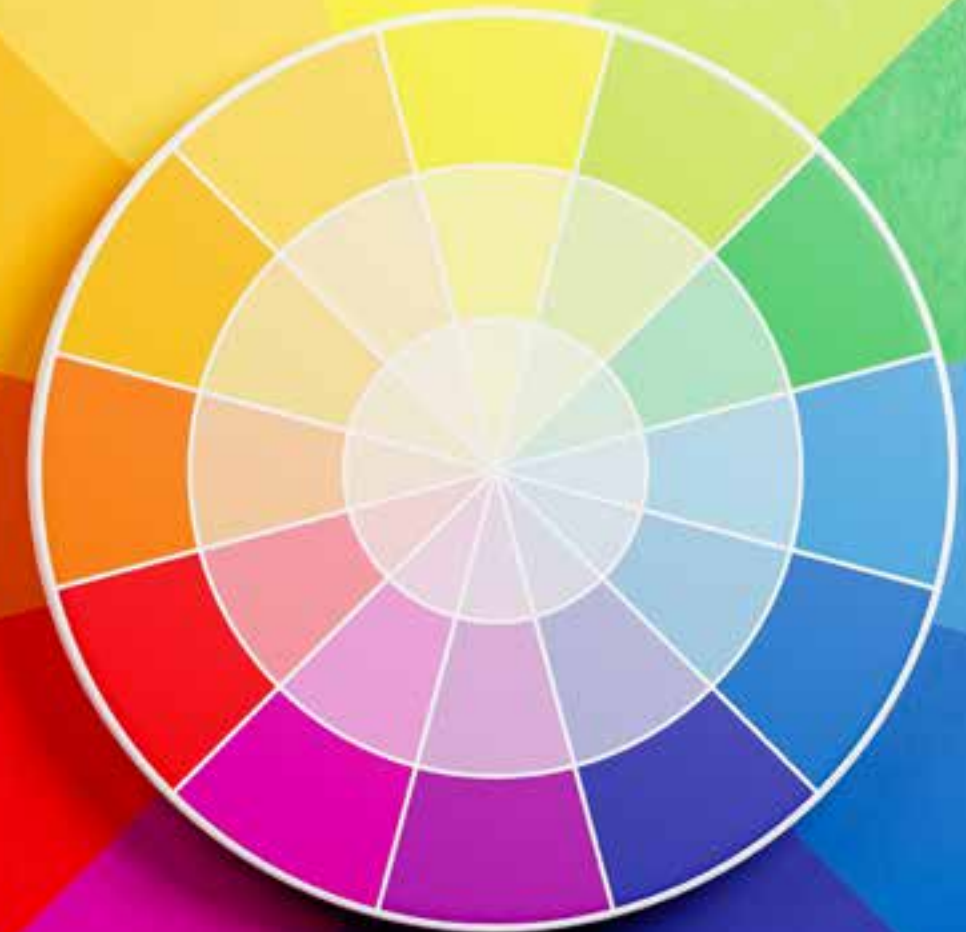
IF YOU APPROACH HOME DESIGN WITH DELIBERATE color schemes in mind, you can craft seriously stunning spaces. Use the following advice to identify cohesive hues and choose features like sofas, rugs, pillows, and art in perfectly balanced shades.

THE COLOR WHEEL

This detailed tool may seem intimidating at first, but once you familiarize yourself with it, you can find shortcuts to designing any room. The color wheel shows the relationship between colors, starting with the three primary ones (red, yellow, and blue) and the secondary shades you get from combining these (orange, green, and purple). More complex tones arise as you proceed outward to the wheel's edge. Here are the types of appealing schemes you can create by using it:

- **Complementary:** opposite-facing colors on the wheel that balance each other out, such as blue and orange
- **Monochromatic:** a tone-on-tone scheme that combines various shades of the same color, such as forest green, olive green, and aloe green
- **Analogous:** a symphony of like colors with similar base tones—such as emerald and gold, which have primary yellow in common
- **Triadic:** a triangle of three evenly spaced colors on the wheel, such as yellow-orange, turquoise, and fuchsia, for bold yet balanced contrast
- **Tetradic:** a four-color scheme that includes two sets of complementary hues

It's possible to dive even deeper into color theory, but doing so can really consume an afternoon. So it may be more efficient to use a digital color wheel, such as the one by Canva, to build nice palettes for your home rather than attempt to construct them on your own. Don't overthink this; just try out various schemes and placements on the wheel until you arrive at ones that stand out to you.





NEAT AND NEUTRAL

Want a shortcut to style without having to spin a wheel? Embrace the trend of all-neutral rooms, which feature colors like white, gray, brown, and black. Going neutral is a very trendy approach to design, and rooms with these shades are fairly simple to arrange. But because such styles are devoid of bolder colors, they need a balance of dark, light, and medium tones to lend visual appeal. For example, decorate a tan dining table with medium-gray chairs, then top it with black candleholders and white candlesticks. It's that easy. These pieces will look magnificent together and create a perfectly pleasing atmosphere.

You may find the pure-neutral look too sterile and prefer more energetic or soothing pops of color. If so, go for it! Just keep in mind that every room needs neutrals; they balance bolder tones, keep them grounded, and prevent rooms from looking oversaturated. And, fortunately, you're free to blend neutrals as you'd like without fear of clashing. They don't exist on the color wheel because they're not based on combinations of red, yellow, and/or blue, so they won't compete with other hues.



FIND INSPIRATION

Now that you know how to build a color palette, you can play with various schemes and implement them right at home. Of course, that leads to the next challenge. Inspiration is often difficult for creative projects like home design, especially when you're dealing with an empty sandbox of a room and aren't sure where to start. How do you build a color scheme when you don't have a dominant hue in mind?

Perhaps the simplest way to begin a design or redesign is to base it on the space's current palette. Select your favorite material or decorative piece in a room, and work from there. Maybe you have a gorgeous tufted sofa in maroon and a tropical painting that features vibrant sea blues.

Going neutral is a very trendy approach to design, and rooms with these shades are fairly simple to arrange.

Take the dominant colors of these pieces, and use the color wheel to find suitable hues that pair with them. Continuing the previous example, ivy green would form a triadic scheme with maroon and sea blue, so you could add leafy plants and matching accent decor to the room. Pepper in some light neutrals like beige pillows and dark neutrals like walnut end tables, and you have a balanced, harmonious space. Again, it's that easy.

PLOTTING YOUR COURSE

Once you know where to start, you can shop for home goods that fit neatly into your preferred color scheme. Be sure to print out or take a screenshot of the palette you designed (or carry swatches) to use as a guide as you hunt down accurate hues. To stay on track with your new scheme, try shopping for furniture and decor in this priority order:

Large pieces

Opt for broad seating furniture and prominent storage pieces in neutral shades. (Remember to balance light tones with dark ones.) Alternatively, you could add one eye-popping element in a bold color like goldenrod or amethyst to give a room an excellent centerpiece.

Smaller decor

Think wall art, armchairs, plants, and side tables. These pieces are better for introducing bold colors, but try not to oversaturate rooms. If you ever feel like you're going overboard, select neutrals to pare back—after all, they will match virtually everything!



Accent decor

These are the simplest pieces to swap if you're tweaking the palette of a finished room. Find pillows, throws, vases, coffee-table books, and other ornaments that directly showcase your color scheme for pops of attention-grabbing vibrancy. IKEA's and Fable's online shops, for instance, offer tools that allow you to browse by color and pinpoint perfect matches.

LOVE THE ROOM YOU'RE IN

If you're still feeling overwhelmed by the rainbow of shades on the color wheel and the multicolored patchwork of goods in home decor shops, you can hand the task of decorating to a professional. But whether you decide to go it alone or enlist help, there's a special, undeniable joy in identifying a beautiful piece of decor and just knowing that it will match perfectly with its surroundings. Slide a vase onto a shelf, step back, and admire it nestled among its new family.



MUST-HAVES FOR *Effortless Entertaining*

Written by **LAUREN KIM**

Gathering with family and friends is one of the most cherished traditions of the holiday season, but it can also require a fair amount of prep if you're hosting. Here are some serving essentials that can help you present delicious meals, impress your guests, and make cleanup effortless, leaving you more time to enjoy the festivities.

Covered charcuterie board

A stylish platter filled with meats, cheeses, and snacks is a perfect centerpiece for any get-together, and a covered one will help keep everything fresh and presentable. Pair your board with elegant serving utensils like cheese knives, spreaders, and small forks to make it easy for guests to sample its tasty offerings.

Slow cooker

This convenient set-it-and-forget-it appliance will keep everything from hearty chili to mulled wine heated and ready to serve. Look for a slow cooker with a Warm setting to maintain



the ideal serving temperature without overcooking its contents. Additionally, an oval-shaped one will be the most versatile because it can accommodate larger cuts of meat and a variety of dishes. If you expect to host a crowd or multiple events, consider acquiring two vessels, such as a seven-to-eight-quart one for

your main course and another with sections for appetizers like cheeses or dips. Slow cookers can also simplify cleanup since their pots are usually nonstick and dishwasher safe.

Dinnerware

A versatile collection of white plates will not only make your



A versatile collection of white plates will not only make your food look great but also match just about any holiday tablescape.

food look great but also match just about any holiday tablescape; add a few similar serving dishes to elegantly present everything from fresh crudités to pastry-wrapped hot dogs. However, just be sure that your choices are made of a durable material like porcelain so they last year after year.

You could then add stainless-steel flatware in silver or even gold or matte black for a modern touch of elegance, accompanying it with eight-ounce tumblers, which are ideal for both cocktails and mocktails. Finally, complete the look with colorful cloth napkins of your choice for an extra dash of festivity.

Cleanup products

To make packing up and storing leftovers as simple as possible, have a collection of glass containers with lids on hand. And consider gifting yourself a robot vacuum so it can clean your floors after your guests are gone—providing you with well-deserved time to relax and bask in a job well done.





WELCOMING FARE FOR WINTER



ADAPTED FROM A COOKBOOK FOR
WINTER: MORE THAN 95 NURTURING
& COMFORTING RECIPES FOR THE
COLDER MONTHS. PUBLISHED
BY RYLAND PETERS & SMALL.



SCAN THE QR CODE
for the full cookbook.

Croûte Chocolat

Bread and chocolate are an ever popular combination in Switzerland, and this sweet spin on the classic croûte fromage (melted cheese on bread) makes a great finale for any meal. Serve it with lashings of vanilla custard on the side.

SERVES 6

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tablespoon butter, for greasing
- 14 oz. panettone, brioche or raisin bread (approx. 12 slices, about 4 inches square and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick)
- 2 bananas, sliced
- 9 oz. strawberries, hulled and halved
- 4 tablespoons amaretto
- 5½ oz. dark/bittersweet chocolate, grated
- Vanilla custard, to serve

A 2-QUART BAKING DISH, GREASED

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1/** Preheat the oven to 350°F.
- 2/** Arrange the slices of panettone, brioche or raisin bread in overlapping rows in the prepared baking dish.
- 3/** Insert the slices of banana and strawberry halves between the slices of panettone. Sprinkle with amaretto and then add a layer of grated chocolate on top.
- 4/** Transfer to the preheated oven and bake for 25 minutes until puffed up and the chocolate has melted. Serve with plenty of vanilla custard.

Recipe by **LOUISE PICKFORD**
Photography by **IAN WALLACE** © RYLAND PETERS & SMALL

Baked French Onion Soup *with Gruyère topping*

Slowly braised onions are truly one of life's pleasures, especially in this classic, comforting soup, with its topping of melted cheese.

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS:

5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 lb. 4 oz. onions, thinly sliced
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
2 teaspoons freshly chopped thyme
½ cup fruity red wine
4 cups vegetable stock
½ French baguette
⅔ cup grated Gruyère
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1/** Preheat the oven to 400°F.
- 2/** Heat the oil in a 4-quart Dutch oven over a medium heat and gently fry the onions, garlic and thyme with a little salt and pepper for 25 minutes until really soft and lightly golden, stirring frequently to prevent the onions from burning.
- 3/** Add the wine, bring to the boil and boil for 5 minutes or until evaporated, then pour in the stock. Bring back to the boil and season to taste.
- 4/** Cut the bread into slices ½ inch thick and arrange over the top of the soup. Scatter over the Gruyère and Parmesan cheeses and transfer the pan to the preheated oven. Bake uncovered for about 10–15 minutes until the soup is bubbling and the cheese melted and golden. If you wish, you can brown the top of the cheese under a hot broiler/grill.
- 5/** Cool for 10 minutes before serving.

Recipe by LOUISE PICKFORD
Photography by IAN WALLACE © RYLAND PETERS & SMALL





Roast Squash & Lentil Salad

This is simple to make and such a satisfying dish to eat on colder days. Butternut squash contrasts nicely with the dark and earthy lentils and if you’ve got some feta lurking in the fridge, throw a few crumbs on top to serve.

SERVES 8 TO SHARE, 4 AS A MAIN

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 lb. 4-oz. winter squash, such as butternut, pumpkin, hubbard or acorn
- About 4 tablespoons olive oil
- A couple of pinches of dried oregano
- A few sprigs of fresh rosemary
- 6 garlic cloves, unpeeled and halved
- 9-oz. packet of cooked Puy lentils
- 9-oz. packet of cooked green lentils
- ½ red onion, thinly sliced
- 3½ oz. cooked beetroot/beet, cut into wedges
- A small handful freshly chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1/** Preheat the oven to 400°F.
- 2/** Peel and deseed the squash and cut the flesh into 1-inch slices (if you are using butternut, you can leave the skin on as it will cook okay). Put the squash pieces in a bowl and add a glug of olive oil, the oregano, rosemary and garlic, then mix well.
- 3/** Tip into a roasting pan and roast in the preheated oven for 30 minutes, or until the squash is tender and cooked and starting to brown at the edges.
- 4/** Tip both the Puy and green lentils into a large bowl and add the red onion, beetroot wedges and chopped parsley. Dress the salad with a generous amount of the remaining olive oil and a splash of red wine vinegar—taste and adjust the balance of olive oil and vinegar to taste. Season with salt and pepper.
- 5/** To serve, add the roasted squash to the bowl and fold it into the lentils, along with any cooking juices in the pan.

Recipe by THEO A. MICHAELS
Photography by MOWIE KAY © RYLAND PETERS & SMALL

Harvest Pie

This harvest pie is packed with canned lentils and vegetables and uses potato and leek soup to bring everything together for a hearty and savory supper. If you were short on time, you can mix the filling directly in the pastry case and just top with a pastry lid, then into the oven for a quicker fix.

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS:

1 lb. 2 oz. ready-made puff pastry

1 egg, whisked

2 x 14-oz. cans green lentils,
drained and rinsed

14-oz. can baby carrots and petit pois,
drained and rinsed

14-oz. can green beans, drained and rinsed

14-oz. can potato and leek soup

3 tablespoons plain/all-purpose flour,
plus extra for dusting

1 tablespoon butter, diced

1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs

1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

½ teaspoon curry powder

AN 11 X 8 INCH BAKING PAN

INSTRUCTIONS:

1/ Preheat the oven to 425°F.

2/ Cut the block of pastry in half and roll out one half on a floured work surface to about ⅛ inch thick. Use this to line the baking pan, allowing the pastry to overhang the top lip of the pan. Line with baking parchment and baking beans (or raw rice, etc.) and blind bake in the preheated oven for 20 minutes. Remove from the oven, remove the parchment and baking beans, then brush with some of the whisked egg and return to the oven for another 5 minutes.

3/ In a mixing bowl, gently fold all the remaining ingredients together. Pour into the baking pan on top of the cooked pastry and level out with the back of a spoon. Roll out the remaining pastry to cover the top, crimping around the edges to seal.

4/ Pierce the top with a sharp knife to help the steam release, brush with the remaining egg and season the top. Bake in the oven for a further 30 minutes or until the top is golden. Leave to rest for at least 15 minutes to allow the filling to set before serving.

Recipe by **THEO A. MICHAELS**
Photography by **MOWIE KAY © RYLAND PETERS & SMALL**





FESTIVE HOLIDAY **PARTY TIPS**

Written by **LAUREN KIM**

If you are familiar with classic holiday movies, you probably remember that the Grinch nearly ruined Whoville's jolly atmosphere and Ebenezer Scrooge dampened others' joyful mood. If you are attending a holiday get-together, follow these guidelines so you can be a cheery holiday host or guest, not a Grinch or a Scrooge.

PARTY HOST

Your job as host is to plan and throw a party your guests will enjoy. These steps can help make your party a success.

Get the party started

You first need to let your guests know who is invited and other important details, such as what, where, and when. "Whether it is a text invite, a phone call, or an engraved invitation, the nature of that invite sets the tone for the event," says Daniel Post Senning, copresident of the Emily Post Institute. The Emily Post Institute provides guidance on etiquette, manners, and modern social conduct. The holidays can be busy, so get your invites out early before your guests' calendars fill up.

Put out a spread

Food and drink are often the center of a holiday party, so put some thought into your menu. Depending on whether your get-together will be formal or casual, you could plan a three-course meal or simply put out a collection of finger foods. It's up to you. Your guests might even appreciate just having a selection of decadent desserts.

Get into the spirit

'Tis the season, so you'll want to add holiday flair to your festivities. You don't have to be too fancy; you can keep the decor simple with sprigs of evergreen, garlands of paper snowflakes, and strings of lights. A playlist of holiday tunes will add a lively vibe.

Exchanging gifts

Presents are a holiday tradition, so let your guests know if your party will include a gift exchange. You could host a white elephant game, in which everyone anonymously brings a wrapped present and who gets what is partially left to chance. Or you could hold a secret Santa exchange and pair up guests to give and receive gifts. These games can be enjoyable icebreakers. Partygoers will have a blast trying to figure out who brought which gifts.



Be a good host

As the host, your role is to make sure everyone enjoys the party. Talk with your guests during your event and say goodbye when they leave, Senning says. These suggestions could help increase your party's fun factor:

- Provide seasonal props, such as confetti, fun eyewear, long holiday scarves, and oversized faux snowflakes, that your guests can pose with for photos.
- Think of a theme for your party. For example, you could ask everyone to bring homemade cookies to swap or wear an ugly holiday sweater.
- Plan party games and activities, such as a holiday-themed bingo game or decorating gingerbread houses.

PARTY GUEST

As a guest, there are also things to keep in mind to help foster a better party.

RSVP and mind your manners

Make sure you respond to the invitation. "The most common mistake people make is not responding," Senning says. "Sometimes people have difficulties saying no." If you don't accept or decline an invite, your host won't have an accurate head count to plan the party. You should also arrive on time, actively participate, and be polite to other guests.

Thank your host

It's thoughtful to bring a small gift for your host, such as mulling spices for holiday beverages, winter-themed drink coasters, or holiday-scented soap. Also, be sure to thank them when you leave or follow up soon after to do so.

Offer to help clean up

Parties are fun, but the cleanup afterward is not. Give your friend or family member who hosted the get-together a hand and help put things away, or offer to take out the trash and recycling after the party winds down.

STAY WARM, SAVE MONEY

Written by **ANDRE RIOS**

Wintertime can inundate your home with snow, ice, or frigid winds, depending on where you reside. And while your first move may be to crank up the furnace, there are other cost-effective ways to keep chilly conditions at bay. Try these simple and impactful solutions throughout your abode, and you'll stay cozy all winter long.



Examine furnace filters

Check these heater accessories for cleanliness, and replace them at least every two to three months or as the manufacturer advises; if they're clogged, your furnace will have to work harder to circulate air. For whole-home efficiency, ask an HVAC technician to recommend cleaning times for your air registers, baseboard heaters, and radiators as well.

Address your ducts

Similarly, objects obstructing your registers, such as furniture or boxes, can interfere with your heater's ability to distribute warm air. Especially if you've redecorated this year, go room to room to ensure that nothing is blocking the flow of heat through any of them.

Install a smart thermostat

Adding this tool enables you to generate only as much heat as you need, potentially lowering your energy bills. For instance, you can set automatic schedules based on the time of day, creating more warmth when you're awake and reducing it while you're asleep or out of the house. In fact, adjusting your thermostat 7–10 degrees lower than its normal temperature setting for eight hours daily can help you save up to 10 percent annually on your electric costs.



Reduce your water temperature

There's a chance your water heater is overworking when you run your shower, dishwasher, or washing machine. The general recommended setting is 120 degrees, but to save money, consider turning the appliance down 5 to 10 degrees, testing it until you reach a temperature you can be satisfied with.

Check your chimney

While using a fireplace is a simple and satisfying way to get warm, its chimney can also allow heat to escape through it. Always shut the flue when your fireplace is not in use to prevent air transfer, only opening it right before lighting the hearth again. You can purchase a fireplace plug if necessary to create a stronger seal.

Deal with drafts

Does a pesky draft seem to seep from beneath your exterior or basement door? Laying door snakes may help put a stop to this. You can find these weighted fabric tubes at many major retailers or search for a guide online to making your own. And for a more permanent solution to door and window drafts, seal any gaps around the frames using weather stripping or caulk.

Hang heavy drapes

Swapping thin curtains or drapes with thicker alternatives can preserve warm air inside your house and keep chilly outdoor air out; look for thermal options that are designed to provide insulation. However, you should open *any* treatments on bright days, especially those on south-facing windows, to invite sunlight into your rooms. Just make sure to close them at night to minimize heat loss.



Layer in textiles

Finally, don't overlook the impact of creating a cozy lounging atmosphere. If you have rooms with cold hardwood, ceramic tile, or laminate flooring, laying rugs will add a soft cushion to help keep your feet warm. And blankets, duvets, thick clothing, and slippers are perfect for warding off the chill—especially if you join a loved one for a heartwarming cuddle session. While this can't overcome subzero temperatures, you'd be surprised by how effective layering can be at alleviating cool winter nights and keeping your heating use in check.



ESSENTIAL HOLIDAY STORAGE TIPS

Written by **LAUREN KIM**

Everyone agrees that stowing away festive decor isn't nearly as much fun as putting it up. But how you go about the task *is* important—with proper care and organization, your keepsakes will be easier to unpack next season and may even last longer.

Prepping and packing

First, think carefully about where you'll stash your seasonal items. Stackable containers are best for shelves, whereas ones with handles will allow you to capitalize on wall space. In addition, check your lights and other trimmings for damage, and repair or replace any as needed. And before you start packing, give your items a wipe with a clean cloth to remove any dust. (For a menorah, fill a bucket with warm water to remove wax, then towel dry it.)

Next, check to see if you still have your decorations' original packaging; since it's custom-made for them, it will maximize space and protection. If you don't, try an ornament bin with compartments to safeguard fragile pieces.

Also, for easier access later, keep related objects together—for

example, put all your ornament boxes in one container and your gift wrap and bows in a wrapping-paper organizer. Pack heavier treasures separately or at the bottom of their vessels to prevent them from breaking more fragile items.

Storing your bins

Now that the time-consuming part is done, you can put your packed bins away. Label them for easier identification, and consider keeping a simple inventory list for your holiday storage space on your computer or phone. Stack everything in a clean, dry space out of direct sunlight to prevent damage, putting essentials such as your tree stand at the top or in front for quick access when it's time to welcome the holiday season all over again.



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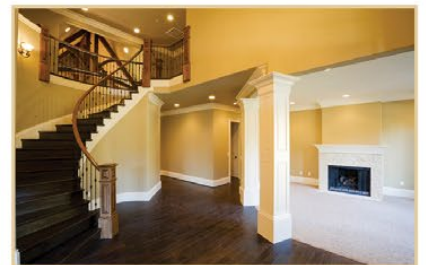
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