

Compliments of Stacey Shanner

# AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

THE MAGAZINE CELEBRATING LIFE IN AMERICA

ISSUE 88



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## TEXTILES AND TRADITION

**PAGE 36** A DIY remodel that mixes mid century modern with natural materials

**24** | tiptoe around the tulips

**44** | keeping the dream alive

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# American Lifestyle

magazine

Dear Bill and Judy,

This issue of American Lifestyle magazine pays homage to the importance of tradition and legacy, concepts that root us to generations before and connect us to precious memories. In the town of Mount Vernon, Washington, a spectacle of color blooms each April in the form of the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival. Since the first festival in 1984, hundreds of thousands of flower enthusiasts make an annual trek to the Pacific Northwest to witness the fields awash in vivid hues.

Movies also have the power to create sentimental feelings, and one movie in particular inspired a group to purchase a piece of land on a century-old farm that held meaning for many. The Field of Dreams Movie Site in Dyersville, Iowa, is a destination that movie lovers can visit to reminisce and even play on the baseball field used in the iconic movie Field of Dreams.

For Mili Suleman, the tradition of Indian weaving was her inspiration for branching out from graphic design into interior design and the textile industry. After many visits to India exploring artisan villages, she fell in love with handloom weaving and developed a relationship with the weavers. She wove her KUFRI Life Fabrics line throughout her home remodel: in pillows, upholstery, linens, and more.

May you always reflect on the traditions in your own life that bring you joy. As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

Stacey Shanner



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## Front of Tear Out Card 1

### COOKIES

for breakfast

1¼ c. certified gluten-free rolled oats (not quick-cooking)

1 tsp. ground cinnamon

½ tsp. baking soda

½ tsp. fine sea salt

½ c. almond flour

¼ c. brown rice flour

½ c. mashed ripe banana (about 1 large banana)

½ c. smooth almond butter, stirred

3 tbsp. pure maple syrup

*(continued on other side)*

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## Back of Tear Out Card 1



*(ingredients continued)*

- 2 tbsp. ground flaxseed
- 3 tbsp. liquid virgin coconut oil
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1 c. add-ins of your choice (a mix of dried blueberries, pumpkin seeds, or chopped walnuts)

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, stir together the rolled oats, cinnamon, baking soda, sea salt, almond flour, and brown rice flour until combined.
3. In the bowl of a food processor, combine the mashed banana, almond

- butter, maple syrup, ground flaxseed, coconut oil, and vanilla. Process on high until the mixture is smooth.
4. Scrape the almond butter mixture into the large bowl with the oats and flour mixture. Throw your add-ins into the bowl. Stir the mixture with a spatula until you have a unified and very stiff cookie dough.
  5. Drop 2 tablespoons of dough per cookie onto the prepared baking sheet. Flatten each mound of dough with the palm of your hand. Slide the baking sheet into the oven and bake until lightly golden

brown, about 15 to 17 minutes. Cool cookies completely before storing in an airtight container. These will last on the counter for 5 days. You can also wrap each cookie individually with plastic wrap and freeze them. I place all the wrapped cookies in a resealable bag and defrost them as needed.

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# IN THIS issue

6 | The Sweet Taste of Success

10 | Plants on the Menu

18 | Shades of Sound: The Art of Melissa McCracken

24 | Tiptoe Around the Tulips

32 | The Art and Science of Stargazing

36 | Textiles and Tradition

44 | Keeping the Dream Alive





# the sweet taste of SUCCESS

interview with **kate weiser**  
written by **i. j. ramos**  
photography by **justin clemmons**

It's been said that eating is a necessity, but cooking is an art. Chocolatier Kate Weiser would certainly agree. After training across the country, she perfected her own style of chocolate culinary art and turned it into a Dallas-based business, Kate Weiser Chocolate, which offers breathtaking works that are as delicious as they are beautiful.

## Where did you grow up? Was food a big part of your family life?

I grew up in Kansas City, Kansas, and had a great childhood. My dad was really into food and still is. He would pair food with wine and made sure that I had an appreciation for a well-cooked meal. Food was always made with love, and cooking someone a nice meal was considered the best gift in my family.

## When did you first have an interest in culinary creations?

I started baking and making pastries in my parents' kitchen growing up. I would give my parents a grocery list and spend weekends making desserts out of cookbooks that were way above my skill set. This would usually result in huge messes and food explosions, but I loved it. I began collecting dessert cookbooks when I was ten or eleven.

## What was your inspiration for turning chocolate into works of art?

I've never really known exactly where the inspiration comes from. I think once you come to the realization that anything can be created out of chocolate and eliminate any restrictions on yourself, the ideas can flow easily. I was never an art student or would say that I was great at painting or drawing, but chocolate somehow speaks to me.

## What made you decide to put down roots in the Dallas area?

It was really because of the Trinity Groves business district and what they could offer me. I am part of a restaurant incubator, which is one of the first of its kind across the whole country. I had the opportunity to try my hand at running a business without taking on the financial risk of doing it on my own. If the entire thing failed, I would just have to find a new job. At twenty-six years of age, that sounded good to me!

## How many people are on your team? How important is teamwork to your success?

Teamwork is vital to the success of any brand. Without my people, I would not be able to keep going—it's as simple as that. Everyone here makes a mark on this company and makes a difference in its growth. Currently, I have sixteen employees, but during the holiday season—October to March—we double that.

## What's the process for creating a new chocolate? Is it like art?

Chocolate is not just an art; it is also a science. Creating the colorful and artistic shell of the chocolate is the easy part; the science is in the fillings. You have to maintain a balance between flavor and texture while also maintaining shelf life. So you might have a recipe that has a long shelf life, but if it doesn't taste exactly the way you want it, it's back to the drawing board.

Creating a new flavor altogether also means updating all your marketing and packaging materials, which is very expensive. So it's all about timing: if it's time to order new boxes anyway, then it's a good time to add a flavor.

## How do you create the paint-like effect on your chocolates?

I use colored cocoa butter. The company I source for this ingredient uses food colorings to create different colors. Cocoa





butter paints on a lot like acrylic paint, but you have to temper it just like chocolate. It's a great ingredient to use to express the flavor within the chocolate. We use a couple of techniques that we layer onto the mold. Flicks and splats come first, and then something I call the "crazy brush." It's basically a "close your eyes and move your paintbrush really fast" technique. Last, we airbrush the entire mold with another solid color.

**How many different flavors of chocolate do you offer? What are the most popular? What are your personal favorites?**

We have thirty different flavors of chocolate. Our most popular are hazelnut latte, key

lime pie, peanut brittle, and truffle honey. I cannot stop eating the key lime pie and the passion fruit chocolates.

**Has it ever been difficult to see one of your intricate works of art get eaten?**

Never. You will never get the true joy out of the piece unless you eat it!

**Who do you look up to in the chocolate-making world? Is there someone you're dying to see walk through the doors of your shop?**

I've had the pleasure of meeting one of my chocolate heroes, Christopher Elbow. I also admire Thomas Haas, David H. Chow, and

Francisco Migoya, to name a few. I still have so much to learn and these chefs continue to inspire me every day.

I think if Patrick Roger walked into my shop, I would have a mini heart attack. Someone more mainstream would have to be Gordon Ramsay. I remember watching *Kitchen Nightmares* on the night I moved into my shiny new kitchen. I think everyone opening a food business should binge-watch a season of that show. You can learn so much from watching other people's mistakes. The businesses on the show that have succeeded are the ones where the owner doesn't give excuses or blame anyone else and is willing to change and take charge. That stuck with me, and I would thank him for that.



“Cocoa butter paints on a lot like acrylic paint, but you have to temper it just like chocolate.”

**When did you start chocolate-making classes? What do you like about this environment that differs from the other aspects of business?**

I recently started the classes as a way to bring in more excitement during the summer season from May to August, when it's so hot here in Dallas and business slows down as a result. I really enjoy it because I get to connect one-on-one with my customers and they get a special inside look at just how hard we work to make these little chocolates. When you can get your customer to connect on that level with your product, it's a win. I just wish I had a bigger kitchen! The classes sell out quickly since I can only take twelve people per class.

**How important is it for you to push boundaries, both in your business and in life?**

If you are not pushing yourself and your own boundaries, then you are stagnant. Growth is uncomfortable, but the challenge is what makes me feel alive. Life would be too boring if I just stuck to the status quo.

In fact, for Christmas of 2016, I had so much going on, I decided not to create any new products. It was smart from a business standpoint, but I felt like a bit of the magic was lost.

**How much of what you do is fun and how much is hard work?**

It's all fun and it's all hard work, if that

makes sense. The most fun part is putting something new into production. The hard work comes into play when my team and I realize we have to make 20,000 of whatever it is.

**What does creativity mean to you in the kitchen? What are some of the most memorable showstoppers your team has created?**

I think creativity is a muscle. You have to work out your creative muscles to stay in creative shape. There was a point in my business when I was not in the kitchen as much as I would have liked, and once I got back into it, it took me a long time to get the creative juices flowing again.

Our most memorable showstoppers would be our Easter chocolate displays. Each year, we create a themed display out of chocolate eggs. The first year was the solar system, with each planet and the sun as an egg. The 2017 display was probably my favorite—it was a desert scene with chocolate cacti made out of egg shapes.

**What are you passionate about outside of making chocolate?**

Chocolate making is obviously my number one passion, but I do love food in general. I have so many restaurants on my bucket list that I would travel halfway around the world just to eat in. I love cooking at home, experimenting, and learning more about the savory side, too.

I also have a huge passion for fitness and exercise and what it does for the mind and body. I love the discipline and the pain of training. I love feeling strong and motivated and pushing myself as hard as I can. It's really incredible what it does for my creativity, my stress levels, and my focus in the kitchen. I would be my own "kitchen nightmare" if I didn't get my workout in.

For more info, visit [kateweiserchocolate.com](http://kateweiserchocolate.com)





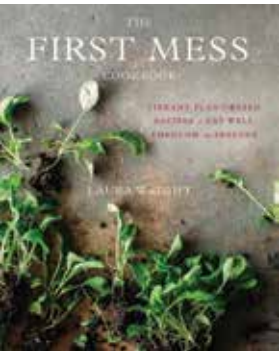
# plants on the menu



recipes by **laura wright** | photography by **laura wright**



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## Sunshine Everything Crackers

THESE GOLDEN CRISP CRACKERS remind me of those cheesy goldfish-shaped snacks that I used to love in my pre-vegan days. They're nice to have around for dips and appetizer platters. I mostly just snack on them plain because they have so much flavor. I cut them into boring old squares, but if you have some cute mini cutters or forms, you could have some fun with these.

- 1 cup chickpea flour
- 1 cup certified gluten-free oat flour
- 2 teaspoons nutritional yeast
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- Pinch of cayenne (optional)
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons sunflower oil
- ¼ cup filtered water, plus extra, if necessary
- ¼ cup mixed raw seeds (sesame, sunflower, and hemp are my favorites)

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. In the bowl of a food processor, combine the chickpea flour, oat flour, nutritional yeast, sea salt, garlic powder, ground turmeric, cayenne, if using, and sunflower oil. Pulse the machine to get everything lightly mixed. Mix on high until you have a wet and uniform crumbly mixture.
3. With the food processor on low, slowly pour the filtered water through the feed tube of the food processor. The cracker dough should start to form a large ball. If the ball isn't forming, add more water by the teaspoon through the feed tube.
4. Open the lid of the food processor and add the mixed seeds. Pulse the dough a couple of times to distribute the seeds.
5. Lay a sheet of parchment paper, about the size of a large baking sheet, on the counter. Dump the cracker dough onto the parchment and flatten it a bit with your hands. Lay another sheet of parchment paper on top of the dough.
6. With a rolling pin, evenly roll the cracker dough out to roughly an ⅛ inch thickness. Remove the top sheet of parchment paper. Carefully transfer the parchment with the rolled-out cracker dough to a large baking sheet.
7. With a knife, score the cracker dough into a grid, forming 1-inch square crackers. Slide the baking sheet into the oven and bake until the edges of the crackers have browned slightly, about 20 minutes. Let the crackers cool completely before storing in a sealed container. The crackers will keep for about 5 days.

MAKES ABOUT 60 1-INCH CRACKERS



# Gingered Brussels Sprout and Shiitake Pot Stickers

THESE LOOK FUSSY TO MAKE WITH THEIR FOLDED TOPS, but I assure you they're anything but. After I moisten the edge of the wonton wrapper, I quickly pinch and secure in any way I can to get the Brussels sprout and shiitake filling locked in. They wind up looking pretty in that "perfectly imperfect" way. If I'm serving these as a snack or an appetizer, I brown them ahead of time and just keep them warm on a low setting in the oven. The salty-sweet soy dip absolutely makes these.

### DIPPING SAUCE

- ¼ cup gluten-free tamari soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- ½-inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated with a Microplane grater
- 1 green onion, finely sliced
- 2 teaspoons sesame seeds

### POT STICKERS

- 1 tablespoon virgin olive oil, plus extra for cooking
- 1 medium shallot, fine dice (about ¼ cup diced shallot)
- 1 cup thinly sliced shiitake mushrooms
- 2 cups sliced Brussels sprouts (about ½ pound)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1-inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled and minced
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 25 wonton wrappers

- 1. Make the dipping sauce:** Whisk the tamari, maple syrup, ginger, green onion, and sesame seeds together in a small bowl. Set aside.
- 2. Make the pot stickers:** Heat the olive oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the shallots. Stir and cook until fragrant and translucent, about 3 minutes. Add the shiitake mushrooms. Stir and sauté the mushrooms until they start to soften, about 2 minutes. Add the Brussels sprouts, garlic, and ginger, and stir. Season everything with salt and pepper. Keep stirring the filling until the Brussels sprouts are bright green and slightly wilted, about 1 minute. Remove from the heat, and allow the filling to cool slightly.
- 3.** Set out a small bowl of water. To assemble the pot stickers, divide the vegetable filling among the wonton wrappers, placing about 1 tablespoon of the filling in the center of each wonton wrapper. Take one filled wonton wrapper and dip your finger in the bowl of water. Moisten two sides of the wrapper, fold all sides together, and pinch along the edge to form a seal. Repeat with the remaining filled wrappers.
- 4.** Wipe the sauté pan and heat a thin slick of olive oil over medium heat. Fry the pot stickers in batches until they're golden brown on all sides, about 1 full minute per side. Add more oil to the pan as needed to finish cooking all the pot stickers.
- 5.** Serve the pot stickers hot with the dipping sauce on the side.

MAKES ABOUT 25 POT STICKERS





# Crispy Avocado Tacos

I LOVE A VEGAN TACO WITH A CLEVER AND SAUCY MUSHROOM/BEAN/LENTIL/TOFU/TEMPEH FILLING. If the taco has an avocado-based topping though—either simply sliced, made into a crema, or some kind of guacamole, that’s always my favorite part. For this main dish, I coat the wedges of ripe avocado in crushed-up, seasoned rice crackers for a very satisfying crunch. The finish of my Creamy Garlic Dressing is the perfect complement.

- CREAMY GARLIC DRESSING**  
¼ cup raw cashew butter  
¼ cup filtered water  
2 cloves garlic, finely grated with a Microplane grater  
3 tablespoons fresh lime juice  
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard  
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons virgin olive oil  
Salt and pepper, to taste

- AVOCADO TACOS**  
2 cups rice crackers  
½ teaspoon chili powder  
½ teaspoon ground cumin  
½ teaspoon garlic powder  
Salt and pepper, to taste  
2 large ripe, but firm, avocados  
16 small (6-inch) corn tortillas, warmed  
2 cups shredded cabbage  
½ small red onion, thinly sliced  
½ cup fresh cilantro leaves  
2 to 4 radishes, thinly sliced  
1 batch Creamy Garlic Dressing  
Hot sauce, for serving (optional)  
Lime wedges, for serving

- 1. Make the Creamy Garlic Dressing:** In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the cashew butter and water. Stir with a spoon or small spatula until the cashew butter is broken up and slightly incorporated. Press the chunks of cashew butter up against the sides of the jar to get it as integrated as possible.
- 2.** Add the garlic, lime juice, Dijon mustard, olive oil, salt, and pepper. Tightly secure the lid, and shake the jar vigorously until the dressing has a smooth and creamy consistency.
- 3. Make the tacos:** Place the rice crackers in the bowl of a food processor. Blitz the crackers on high until they take on the texture of breadcrumbs. Pour the cracker crumbs out into a pie dish or other plate with a lip. Mix the chili powder, cumin, garlic powder, salt, and pepper into the cracker crumbs.
- 4.** Cut the avocados in half lengthwise and extract the pits. Cut the halves into quarters. Then, cut those quarters in half as well. You should have 16 wedges total. Carefully remove the peel from each avocado wedge.
- 5.** Place the avocado wedges in the dish with the cracker crumbs, and carefully turn them over to coat with crumbs on all sides. Lightly press the crumbs into the avocado to make them stick. Once you have all wedges coated, transfer them to a clean plate.
- 6.** For each taco, take one warm corn tortilla and lay an avocado wedge down the middle. Pack a small amount of cabbage next to the avocado wedge. Scatter some red onion slices, cilantro leaves, and radish slices on top. Finish the taco with a drizzle of Creamy Garlic Dressing, some dabs of hot sauce if you like, and lime wedges. Enjoy immediately.

SERVES 4 TO 5





## Cookies for Breakfast

MOST MORNINGS I WAKE UP EARLY ENOUGH TO SIT DOWN AND ENJOY MY BREAKFAST at home while I read the news. On those odd days when I find myself flying out the door, these cookies work nicely. They're *just* sweet enough to feel like a treat and quite good when dunked into hot coffee. The outer part of the cookie has a nice crispness while the inner cookie is similar to a hearty, whole-grain muffin—specifically the top part of the muffin, which everyone knows is the best part.

- 1½ cups certified gluten-free rolled oats (not quick-cooking)
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon fine sea salt
- ½ cup almond flour
- ¼ cup brown rice flour
- ½ cup mashed ripe banana (about 1 large banana)
- ½ cup smooth almond butter, stirred
- 3 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons ground flaxseed
- 3 tablespoons liquid virgin coconut oil
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup add-ins of your choice (I like a mix of dried blueberries, pumpkin seeds, and chopped walnuts)

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, stir together the rolled oats, cinnamon, baking soda, sea salt, almond flour, and brown rice flour until combined.
3. In the bowl of a food processor, combine the mashed banana, almond butter, maple syrup, ground flaxseed, coconut oil, and vanilla. Process on high until the mixture is smooth.
4. Scrape the almond butter mixture into the large bowl with the oats and flour mixture. Throw your add-ins into the bowl. Stir the mixture with a spatula until you have a unified and very stiff cookie dough.
5. Drop 2 tablespoons of dough per cookie onto the prepared baking sheet. Flatten each mound of dough with the palm of your hand. Slide the baking sheet into the oven and bake until lightly golden brown, about 15 to 17 minutes. Cool cookies completely before storing in an airtight container. These will last on the counter for 5 days. You can also wrap each cookie individually with plastic wrap and freeze them. I place all the wrapped cookies in a resealable bag and defrost them as needed.

MAKES 12 COOKIES





# The Art of Melissa McCracken

## SHADES OF SOUND

interview with **melissa mccracken** | written by **alexa bricker**



© Cameron Wiley

Melissa McCracken was twelve years old when she discovered that the way she experiences the world is different from most people. As a synesthete, McCracken has the amazing ability to visualize sounds, letters, and numbers in an array of colors—a gift that lends itself to incredibly dynamic and moving oil paintings.

**What was it like growing up with synesthesia, and what exactly does it mean to be born with this ability?**

It's such a funny thing because I never really knew I was different. For so long, I thought it was a normal occurrence—like the concept of entering a coffee shop and smelling the coffee; you just assume everyone can smell it. The color portion of my brain is arbitrarily triggered when I listen to music or see letters and numbers. It's the same sort of color stimulation as someone telling you to think of the color blue. Seeing the letter A or the number 4 essentially tells me to think of blue.

**When did you first discover that not everyone experiences the world the same way as you?**

I was twelve, and I asked my brother what his color was for the letter C. He brushed me off, saying, "Oh yeah, my letter C is yellow, too." I never really thought much of it after that. But when I got older, I was choosing a ringtone and trying to match it to the color of my phone. I told a friend about my predicament, and he said he had no idea what I was talking about.

It's interesting how natural I assumed it was. Visuals are so often associated with music that I didn't second-guess it. I mean, we have music videos, light shows at concerts, and even album artwork. It just seems natural to have a personal "music video" in my head. When I see color, it's contained in a filter. It's not a hallucination, so it doesn't interfere with my visual field. It's similar to how memory works—you can visualize it and you can see it, but it doesn't come into your visual line of sight.





### Does every synesthete experience synesthesia the same way?

Synesthesia is technically any sort of stimulation or sensory mix-up. I met another girl who has synesthesia, and she experiences voice to shape and taste to pitch, so she'd choose her snacks based on the pitch of the food that she was craving. She also said that her dad had a triangular voice.

I can totally relate to what she's experiencing, but it's difficult to actually understand what she means. It's a very

personal type of experience with each form of synesthesia that people have. I've met people with the same form that I have, and they can listen to the same song as me and see completely different colors.

### What is most challenging about having synesthesia? Did it ever hinder you from relating to other kids your age?

It was very normal—so normal that I didn't even think about it. If anything, I think it might have benefited me. In math, it helped with formulas, as I would remember by color-coding things that I had to know for

a test. If I was missing green, I would think, "Maybe that's a three that I'm missing" because I would see the pattern of colors in my head and would be able to apply it.

### Were you afraid to tell people when you first realized that not everyone experiences stimuli the same way as you?

The only time it feels weird is if someone asks me what I do for a living. Then I have to explain that I'm an artist, but that I work and create a little differently than others. I used to try to verbally explain it to people, but it got to the point where I began to say,



"Well, I'll just show you instead." That's when I started painting; it seemed like a much more effective way to communicate what I was experiencing.

### I saw you went to school for psychology before you decided to pursue art. Does your interest in the mind stem from a desire to know more about your own experiences?

My three favorite things growing up were psychology, art, and music, and so they all converged at one point in my career. Psychology is one of those sciences that

allows you to do work that has a personal and communicative aspect to it, which is an art form in itself. It's something that I'm thinking about going back to school for because I really enjoyed it.

### Since you didn't go to school for art, are you completely self-taught?

I started to pursue a minor in studio art as an undergrad at William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri. I ended up not completing it because life happened and steered me toward a psychology degree and other classes. I was in art classes all throughout

high school, but once I started pursuing it as a career, I realized there's so much material online to teach you and you can find things so easily. I'm such a hands-on learner that I have to make mistakes in order for me to understand what I did wrong.

### Even though you didn't pursue an art degree, did you always know it was something you would continue coming back to throughout your life?

That was the way I looked at it. When I was little, if I got grounded it was always from arts and crafts. Whenever there was a



“Sometimes I’ll listen to a song and be able to paint it immediately, and sometimes I’ll have to mull it over and find all of the details in it. In every aspect of my life, I’ve never been much of a planner, so to listen to a song and say, “OK, these are the colors, and this is the idea” doesn’t work. I have to just go for it.



© Cameron Wiley



project in school, I was always the one who wanted to do the visual side of it. Art was very much embedded in who I was.

I did want to go to art school, but then I kind of had a freak-out moment when I told myself it was impractical. It was always something that felt so natural, though, and made it easy to eventually shift into a career as an artist.

**What is your process like for starting a new piece? Do you listen to a particular song or have a pattern or colors in mind before you start?**

I’ve always loved music, but I was never very talented at it. When I listened to a song that was really inspiring, I wanted to have my own interpretation of it. Sometimes I’ll listen to a song and be able to paint it immediately, and sometimes I’ll have to mull it over and find all of the details in it. In every aspect of my life, I’ve never been much of a planner, so to listen to a song and say, “OK, these are the colors, and this is the idea” doesn’t work. I have to just go for it. This results in a lot of throwaways. I keep working outward, applying layer on top of layer.

**Do you have a particular style of music you prefer to listen to that produces the most vibrant color or pattern experience for you?**

There are some genres that are nicer-looking than others. Country tends to be a simpler form of music, which lends to a simpler picture, so I tend to not go down that route. I love acoustic music, too, but that makes

for a less stimulating picture as well. I love to paint funk music and alternative electric, like Radiohead. That kind of music is always really interesting. Also, I think jazz is good because it has such a soothing look with subtle intricacies. The instruments they’re playing are so developed that it doesn’t sound overwhelming.

**Does each piece that you produce correlate to a particular song? Do you sometimes listen to more than one song for one piece?**

Usually, I stick to one song. One time I painted an entire Bon Iver album titled *For Emma, Forever Ago*. The only reason I chose to do the full album was because this one in particular has such a cohesive sound from start to finish. It flows so nicely. Most often, though, I’ll choose sections of songs because they change so much that I can only cover so much ground before the picture becomes too convoluted.

**Would you be able to create your work without having synesthesia? Would you still have pursued art as a career?**

I always felt like art was so much of me. I would create small art pieces that I thought looked cool, but they weren’t anything I ever planned on selling. I loved looking at art for the technical side of it, but it wasn’t until I was using it as a form of communication that I got into my work so much more. I felt I had to get this part of me across to other people, and synesthesia helped me channel that.

For more info, visit [www.melissasmccracken.com](http://www.melissasmccracken.com)





# tiptoe around the tulips

written by **shelley goldstein** | photography by **shelley rose photography**



Did you know the climate of the Skagit Valley in Washington State is very similar to the climate of the Netherlands, aka the unofficial tulip capital of the world? If you look at a globe and trace your finger west from the Netherlands, you will notice the two locations have similar latitudes, only off by about four degrees. Mild, wet winters and moderate summers make the Skagit Valley (and the Netherlands) prime tulip-growing territory. Every April since 1984, hundreds of thousands of flower lovers make the trek to Mount Vernon, Washington, to witness the dazzling tulip bloom at the monthlong Skagit Valley Tulip Festival.

The first official tulip festival happened quite organically. As executive director Cindy Verge explains, “The Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce got together and said, ‘Wow, we have people coming to see our tulips. We should build a festival around the tulip bloom.’ The festival features two of the original four growers: Skagit Valley Bulb Farm and the Washington Bulb Company.” Verge answered an ad for the sponsorship coordinator position and later became executive director of the festival. Her





*And the flowers are aplenty! Rows and rows of tulips stretch out in a sea of vivid color, with the mountains of the Pacific Northwest as a dramatic backdrop. The Washington Bulb Company alone plants 350 acres of tulips spread across seven fields in the Skagit Valley.*

background in communications means she is able to coordinate the multitude of activities and events that are hosted in various locations across the Skagit Valley. Despite the actual festival only happening for a month, it's a full-time, year-round job. When asked what makes it worthwhile, Verge gushes: "I get to share something that is beautiful with people from all over the world. The work I do allows that to happen. I think that's just fabulous! It's really fun to meet people from Africa and Australia and Europe and the East Coast. It's a tourism industry, so I'm always in contact with people who have come here to have a good time. It's a joy having people who are so excited to see the flowers."

And the flowers are aplenty! Rows and rows of tulips stretch out in a sea of vivid color, with the mountains of the Pacific Northwest as a dramatic backdrop. The Washington Bulb Company alone plants 350 acres of tulips spread across seven fields in the Skagit Valley. When William Roozen, a Dutch tulip grower whose family had been in the business since the 1700s, decided he wanted to give America a shot, he hopped on a boat shortly after marrying his wife and landed in the Skagit Valley. They saved up some money, bought five acres of land, and purchased the Washington Bulb Company. At that time, there were several Dutch growers, some of whom knew each other from Holland. There are now two tulip growers in the Skagit Valley—Roozen's company and the Skagit Valley Bulb Farm, which is run by Jeannette and Tom DeGoede.

#### ROOZENGAARDE

The Washington Bulb Company is the creator behind RoozenGaarde, one of two official festival gardens that visitors can drive to and park in a designated area. RoozenGaarde features forty to fifty acres of tulips, carefully planted in rows for both practical and aesthetic purposes.

Brent Roozen, grandson of founder William, explains, "The fields are created by towing a planter behind a tractor. We start with one variety of tulip, mark it, and use the bulbs until they are gone. Then we mark again with a new variety. The coordinates are also written down and kept in books in case the markers get moved." Tulips are planted on flat ground, but the dirt is mounded up on top of them to create ditches, which help the rainwater to drain.

RoozenGaarde actually spans 200 acres, but only forty to fifty acres of land are planted with tulips. Because tulips are an actual crop, they should only be planted in the same spot every six years to follow best growing practices. RoozenGaarde is divided into six plots, and the tulip bloom migrates from plot to plot each year. Visitors are asked to stay on designated paths and not walk in between the rows to avoid damaging the tulip bulbs. RoozenGaarde also features a smaller display garden, with a theme and precisely designed vignettes that are sketched out with sawdust in the soil before being planted. Because these are planted in the same place each year, gardeners must be meticulously vigilant to spot signs of







botrytis, a type of fungus that can affect tulips and spreads via spores. Diseased tulips are pulled out each morning to ensure the flowerbeds stay clean. Says Roozen, “We pull 5,000 tulips each year. It sounds like a lot, but when you’re growing 500,000, it’s not that many.”

Because tulips are a business for the Roozen clan, tulip varieties that are planted in the fields often coordinate with the varieties in the greenhouse to keep costs down. The fields are mainly used for bulb production, and the greenhouses are used 100 percent for fresh-cut flowers. The leftover bulbs from the greenhouse get planted in the fields to grow for two to three years until they become large enough to become greenhouse bulbs. And the process continues. Currently, 85 percent of income comes from fresh-cut flowers, as opposed to 15 percent in bulb sales. It was the opposite back when William began his business over sixty years ago, but now, with greenhouses and technology, tulips can be grown indoors 365 days a year, as opposed to bulb



production, which only has one season. Fresh-cut flowers are sold to major grocery retailers in the surrounding areas, as well as e-commerce sites like tulips.com, which ships fresh tulips overnight.

Field-grown tulips are also sold in smaller quantities. The blooms tend to be much larger and richer in color than the greenhouse blooms. Roozen explains, “In a greenhouse, winter is simulated via a cooler, and tulips flower in three to four weeks. When they are planted in the field in September and October, they go through the winter naturally and begin poking through in early January. From January to April, they have a very slow growing season, which helps them have a bigger bloom and deeper color.” Field-grown tulips need to be picked shorter so greenery is left on the stem for the bulbs to grow.

#### **TULIP TOWN**

The other official garden of the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival is dubbed Tulip Town, and it features a windmill that owner Tom DeGoede





had built to look like a replica of the windmill in his family's village in Holland. They also create a little town in their barn every year, with a couple of impressive murals. Artwork is displayed by local artists and is available for purchase, along with snacks and hot beverages, which you may want to partake in—April can be chilly and windy in the Pacific Northwest. Behind Tulip Town is another ten to fifteen acres of tulips planted in rainbow stripes of color.



“The festival is typically held for the month of April, but there have been years the bloom began in mid-March or carried over into the first weeks of May.”

Both Tulip Town and RoozenGaarde have become a playground for photographers—professionals and amateurs alike. It can be difficult to rein in selfie-seeking visitors, who sneak between the tulip rows in pursuit of the best photo. Verge says the explosion of social media has been mostly a boon to their campaign, with excited visitors posting photographs of the tulip blooms all over Facebook and Instagram.

Social media is also ideal for keeping visitors posted on the status of the tulip bloom, which can come early or late depending on the temperatures in winter. The festival is typically held for the month of April, but there have been years the bloom began in mid-March or carried over into the first weeks of May.

With a reasonable entrance fee and gorgeous fields in which to roam around, the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival is, without a doubt, worth a visit. Grab a friend to photograph and make a day out of it, and stick around for a meal in Mount Vernon or the neighboring town of La Conner. And remember to tiptoe around the tulips, not through them.

For more info, visit [tulipfestival.org](http://tulipfestival.org)



# THE ART AND SCIENCE OF STARGAZING

written by **matthew brady** | photography by **russ schleipman**, unless noted



1972 was a notable year for US space exploration. The space shuttle program was created, and other astronomical accomplishments included Pioneer 10 entering the asteroid belt, Mariner 9 sending images of Mars, and Apollo 16 and Apollo 17 being launched—with the latter taking the iconic “blue marble” photo of our planet.

Down here on Earth, another journey began, one that would lead to seeing space in an entirely different way in the twenty-first century—through a piece of art.

It all started in West Africa. Fred Schleipman, a machinist, designer, and inventor, was part of a twelve-person expedition that also included Bert Willard, who was the curator of the Springfield Telescope Makers’ museum that famed telescope inventor Russell W. Porter started back in the 1920s. They quickly became good friends, and, since they both lived in Vermont, Bert invited Fred to visit the club after they got back home.

While there, Fred saw the Porter Garden Telescope for the first time. He thought it was beautiful, and he also had ideas for improving on its science. “The optics

weren’t quite what they should be, and the facilities to adjust them didn’t exist at the time,” says Russ Schleipman, Fred’s son and business partner, who is also a professional photographer. “My dad figured that, if he were going to have one of these, he’d have to build it himself. He is a machinist and builds things like tiny turbines that spin at one million RPM—that’s 60,000 revs a second. Precision is important to him; perfection is his thing. So the challenge of making the Porter telescope was a big hurdle of interest for him. However, we realized that, if we were able to build one, we could make them commercially in multiples and start a small business.”

So Fred proposed his idea to the Springfield Telescope Makers. It took a few decades, but the club finally agreed—and a father-son adventure began, named Telescopes of Vermont.

The club loaned them a Porter telescope for only three weeks, so the work would need to be a well-coordinated team effort. “My dad pulled together a team of really talented people,” Russ says. “His apprentice from years ago, Norm Williams, did the machining; it was worth sending the casting to Montana because he’s so darn good. Bert Willard and James Daley, who work on military satellite optics outside of Boston, specified the optics for us. Our pattern maker, Dave Nugent, is phenomenally talented. It was basically a dream team of foundry, machinery, and optics.”

Nugent, a resident of New Hampshire, “put his nose to the grindstone,” Russ recalls. “The original thirty-plus patterns were lost, and the shrinkage inherent in the casting of bronze demanded that we make new ones that would yield castings exactly the same size as the original garden telescope components. That was tricky engineering, involving a lot of computer time.





© Jones and Lamson



"In addition, the machining of the castings is the most demanding part of the manufacturing process because dimensions on bearing surfaces are critical, measured to tenths of thousandths of an inch," he adds. "Because of this, the machining was, and continues to be, very critical to our process."

The process itself is complicated because the workflow requires shipping items back and forth all around the country as the telescopes are being made; however, Russ stresses that "it's worth it to have the best work done right by the right people. That's all that matters, ultimately." He says that there are about three hundred hours lavished on each telescope they make.

Optics and adjustability play an important role for their telescopes as well. The ability to adjust both the primary and secondary mirrors with set screws behind them and to have lasers line up the mirrors exactly is critical, according to Russ: "When you can fine-tune the optics, you get that pleasing sharpness of the dollar bill a hundred feet

away where you can see serial numbers and engravings razor sharp. This was a big advancement from the original.

"We've made some other improvements that are not as obvious," he continues. "There's a thumb drive mechanism that allows you to turn a knob and the telescope will track moving objects such as a heavenly body without slipping. We've added a finder, too, that clips onto the telescope, so when you're using it at night, you can aim it really well at a speck in the sky in your field of view, which is hard to do at 75 power without a good finding mechanism. Otherwise, it's like trying to find an ant on the ground with a microscope."

The end result: a unique piece of functional art that lets people explore the night sky. "It's a true instrument instead of just a sculpture," explains Russ. "The art seduces people over and over again. Guests will gather in a garden, see a sculpture with a long, floral neck, and will ask what it is. It really becomes theater for the person who

wants a gadget that nobody else has." Only thirty-eight have been produced so far, and the edition is limited to two hundred, so there's also a "cachet of rarity along with the delight of surprising guests," says Russ.

As a result, the wonder of the telescope elicits the same reaction wherever Russ goes. "Recently, I was showing the telescope at a private event in New Jersey," he remembers. "I set it up, and people lined up to stare at the eyepiece for a few seconds. There'd be silence each time. Almost every single person whispered the same three words: 'Oh my God.' We're bringing an experience to people that elicits a childlike fascination and excitement, which is really fun to witness."

Even the Queen of England is a fan. "I had a booth at the Chelsea Flower Show in London a few years back," Russ recalls. "I figured, 'Why not invite the Queen?' so I sent our materials over, and I got a phone call a couple of weeks later saying that Her Majesty requested to visit our booth. I had

ten minutes alone with her, and I showed the telescope to her. She was engaged and interested, and she really talked to me and asked pertinent questions. She didn't buy one, but the picture of her on our website was all worth it. It was a wonderful moment and an honor."

A common denominator with every purchase of a garden telescope is a visit from Russ. He flies in, gives a tutorial, and stays until the customer is comfortable with it. "I typically meet some interesting people and get to step inside their lives a bit. That's always a nice facet of the business," he remarks.

It's also a business, he notes, that was founded on Vermont ideals. "Russell Porter was from Vermont, and so is my dad. So it was made and reiterated by two renaissance men from Vermont, about ninety years apart," notes Russ. "Made in Vermont is also all about honesty, craftsmanship, quality, and straightforwardness. This is most definitely a Vermont story."

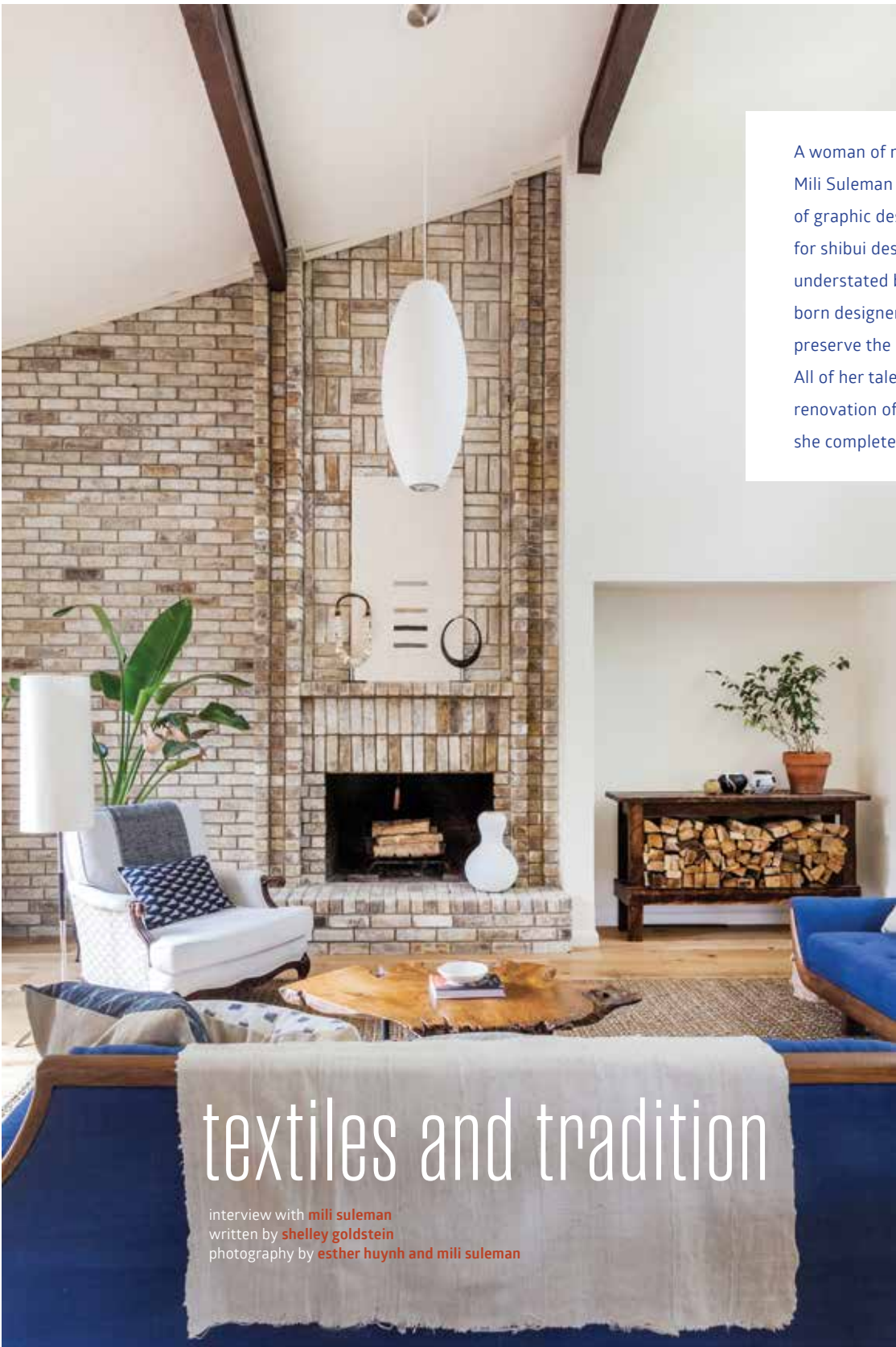
The decade-long journey of making this instrument with his father and his team "is really satisfying," according to Russ. "When you put a Porter Garden Telescope together after it comes back from the last foundry with the patina on it, it's just breathtaking," he adds. "This is a beautiful, bronze, art nouveau sculpture, but it's also a well-engineered instrument brought to life by an extremely talented team."

"That's the human side of this endeavor, and it's what really matters the most," he emphasizes. "Seeing the work put into the telescope and then witnessing the wonder and awe it brings to people is the most enjoyable aspect of resurrecting the garden telescope."

For more info, visit [gardentelescopes.com](http://gardentelescopes.com)

*The art seduces people over and over again. Guests will gather in a garden, see a sculpture with a long, floral neck, and will ask what it is. It really becomes theater for the person who wants a gadget that nobody else has.*





A woman of many creative inclinations, Mili Suleman has combined her knowledge of graphic design and art with her affection for shibui design, the Japanese concept of understated beauty. In addition, this Indian-born designer created a line of textiles to preserve the craft of handloom weaving. All of her talents came together in the renovation of her Dallas, Texas home, which she completed with her husband.

# textiles and tradition

interview with **mili suleman**  
written by **shelley goldstein**  
photography by **esther huynh and mili suleman**

## What traits do you think are important for tackling a large-scale DIY project like this?

I think it's imperative that you, your spouse, or a family member has done remodeling before you take on any large-scale DIY projects. You need the knowledge of electrical, plumbing, materials, tools, and more. One mistake and you could spend a lot more than you save. You also need to be a good planner, be patient, and stay objective in some ways.

My husband is a natural engineer (and a civil engineer by profession); if it wasn't for his know-how, I would have never attempted any of it. Being a young couple, we wanted to save as much as possible and found it to be a ton of fun taking a swing at walls and such. We are the archetypal designer-engineer couple—thankfully, the ideal combination for a project of this nature.

## What city do you live in? What is the vibe of the city?

We technically live in Dallas, but it's twenty minutes north of downtown, so the vibe is larger, suburban-style homes. Our neighborhood is an established pocket of older homes that are aesthetically very different from other homes that proliferate the region. While the vibe is quieter than being near uptown or downtown, it's not a bad compromise.

## Describe the house before the remodel:

It's a 1979 ranch-style home with high ceilings. It's 2,700 square feet with four bedrooms and three full baths. It has a dominant brick double-fireplace. When we bought it, it felt like tiny doorways led you from one space to another. The kitchen had a line of cabinets along both long walls. Saltillo tile and carpet were everywhere—the bathrooms even had carpet.





I KNEW I WANTED TO INCORPORATE MY TEXTILES WHEREVER POSSIBLE, SO I ACTUALLY STARTED WITH SELECTING THE TEXTILES AS MY INSPIRATION POINT. FROM THERE, I CHOSE COLORS FOUND EASILY IN NATURE TO CREATE A BACKDROP WHERE EVERYTHING WORKED IN HARMONY.



BEFORE

Were you able to look past the old style and envision what it could be? What caught your eye that made you want to buy the house?

Dallas is experiencing some kind of gold rush; everyone is pouring in here from the coasts wanting to buy houses. After over a year of looking, we settled for this house because it had no offers and was in an older neighborhood with character. It wasn't our dream house, per se, but I definitely saw the vision the moment I stepped in. I knew we could turn this ship around. The high ceilings, sliding doors to a view of the backyard, and abundant natural light were big selling points.

What style did you envision for the house? What does your planning process look like? What resources do you use for inspiration?

I always look to the architecture of the home to dictate its style. I wanted this house to still have the essence of a 1970s home but with better, updated materials. The house was begging to be opened up in terms of flow, and selecting the right natural materials would make a big difference to how it felt. I also envisioned how I wanted to live and feel in the house: I wanted an open, airy vibe, and I wanted the house to feel both calming and creatively energizing.



I have been looking at and studying design since I was a young girl, so, in a way, I have been preparing for this remodel for years. Acute planning involved budgeting and scouring Houzz, Instagram, and remodeling blogs. I also looked to *Dwell*, *Elle Décor*, and books on 1960s and 1970s architecture and design. I had a moodboard for textiles, colors, and furniture selection.

How would you describe your current style?

I lean heavily toward vintage modern (particularly midcentury modern) with an emphasis on natural materials. For my house, I went with a mid-mod feel mixed with eclectic antique pieces and used natural materials like wood, jute, clay tile, and stone throughout the build and in decorating. I couldn't live without my art, books, textiles, pottery, and great lighting pieces; they are my antidote to life itself and inspire me every day.

How did you choose the color palette for the house?

I knew I wanted to incorporate my textiles



wherever possible, so I actually started with selecting the textiles as my inspiration point. From there, I chose colors found easily in nature to create a backdrop where everything worked in harmony. I stayed away from harsh, bold, and trendy colors. My guiding question throughout my process was always, "Will this selection lend to a calming but creatively energizing environment?" For paint, I chose Benjamin Moore's White Down (at 50 percent tint) as the primary unifying color throughout most of the house. It reflects light beautifully and isn't too stark.

What principles do you keep in mind when you're creating vignettes or choosing accessories for a room? Where do you like to go to find accessories? What patterns and textures are you drawn to?

I am guided by the principles of shibui, a Japanese term meaning simplicity or understated beauty: of allowing something to reflect the highest quality of its values. For example, I didn't want to clutter the alcove near the fireplace with books or a big built-in. I simply chose a rustic wood console





table, stacked it with firewood, and added Japanese pottery and a small elm tree to create a simple scene.

I am also guided by balance that's created by juxtaposing styles. For example, my antique Chinese altar table is quite elaborate and decorative, so I chose a vintage but very modern frosted white glass lamp to juxtapose the table. It creates a design dichotomy, which I love.

I have always gone on treasure hunts in antique stores all over the city and when I'm traveling. I also shop on Craigslist and will reupholster or refinish a piece to bring it back to life. The design district has some good stores specializing in vintage modern pieces. I accessorize with books, so Half Price Books and Amazon are my go-to for those. Textiles and curiosities come from travels and my own collections. I also like to

support friends who create beautiful things, especially pottery and art.

I'm drawn to natural textures. The rugs in the house are all sisal, jute, or cotton. The floors are wide-plank white oak. All my handwoven textiles are cotton. It's all very earthy. I do like patterns, but I prefer ones that feel subtle when grouped together or used in combination with something. If I choose large patterns, I prefer them in understated colors.

### What is your favorite room?

The kitchen. We spent the most money there, and it underwent the biggest transformation. It has color, but it's not overwhelming. It is midcentury-inspired but still timeless. The way the light filters in makes it a happy place to eat breakfast or cook. And I get to enjoy using my textiles here every day.

*For my house, I went with a mid-mod feel mixed with eclectic antique pieces and used natural materials like wood, jute, clay tile, and stone throughout the build and in decorating. I couldn't live without my art, books, textiles, pottery, and great lighting pieces; they are my antidote to life itself and inspire me every day.*





**You have your own fabric line called KUFRI. Can you talk a bit about this and the collaboration with weavers in India? How was this idea conceived? Why is it important to you?**

I had a full-time graphic design career for a long time and wanted to explore something new. I delved into textiles by taking trips to India and exploring the artisan villages. I fell in love with handloom weaving and, bit by bit, developed a relationship with weavers by trying new designs and having them weave them. It's a very slow and organic process, and it has taken me a long time to get a grasp of it because I wasn't formally trained in textiles or interior design. I started selling my textiles through trade showrooms and knocking on doors of big design firms.

It began as just a line of textiles, but it has gained a very deep significance in my life.

KUFRI has become an amalgamation or platform for all my passions, from design to photography to travel. Weaving is a very important craft that represents heritage and history; I want to do my part to help preserve this beautiful craft and revive it. Just as important, I want to help support the weavers and their families. KUFRI is my life's work.

Most of the textiles in my home are from my line—the pillows and throws are all from my own collections, and I use my own textiles for all my kitchen linens; I love how they wash and get softer with use.

**When a room isn't quite coming together, what strategy do you use to make it look cohesive?**

I'll go back to the moodboard and original inspiration images, and I'll see how I can edit and simplify things.

**What is your best advice to people tackling DIY projects?**

Don't get sucked into what's trendy, or worse, what everyone on Instagram is doing. You have to make sure you will get your money back for the money you spend on the remodel. Your remodel should increase the value of your home but not price it out of the neighborhood. If it's your forever house, it doesn't matter, but otherwise you need to stay within a realistic budget. Splurge on one thing you love, and hire a good designer if you feel overwhelmed. Learn how to use tools and be patient with it. Don't let fear stop you from trying.

For more info, visit [kufrilife.com](https://kufrilife.com)

For info about Mili's textiles, visit [kufrilifefabrics.com](https://kufrilifefabrics.com)





KEEPING THE  
DREAM ALIVE

written by matthew brady | photography by field of dreams movie site

*"Is this heaven?"*

*"It's Iowa."*

*"I could have sworn it was heaven."*

This magical conversation between Ray Kinsella and his late father at the end of *Field of Dreams*, the iconic 1989 baseball movie, is followed by a father-son baseball catch—a reconciliation that's left legions of men and women choked up, reminiscing about their own family relationships.

Today, the movie's magic lives on at the Field of Dreams Movie Site in Dyersville, Iowa, where the movie was filmed. Movie buffs and sports fans alike flock to this farming town of 4,100, located approximately ninety minutes north of Davenport and three hours northeast of Des Moines, to experience *Field of Dreams* firsthand. The attraction is maintained by an ownership group, led by Denise Stillman, that strives to keep alive the legacy of not only the movie but also of Don Lansing, on whose farm the movie was filmed.

The 193-acre farm is well over a century old. The land was first turned into a corn-and-bean farm in 1906 by Lansing's grandfather, and Lansing eventually bought the farm he grew up on. In 1987, a volunteer from the then Iowa Film Office knocked on his door, asking if she could submit his farm as a possible site for a movie. "Don thought she was crazy," Stillman notes. "But he OK'd it. When it was selected, it started this whole Cinderella story for him."

*Field of Dreams* hit theaters on April 21, 1989, and, according to Stillman, it didn't take long for the film to have an impact: "The first visitor arrived a few weeks later; he just showed up and sat on the bleachers that were left on Don's front lawn after the movie. After that, they started coming in droves.



“Plus, these visitors wanted to take a piece of something back with them,” she continues. “They would scoop up gravel from his driveway or take blades of grass from the field. Home plate and the bases were stolen numerous times. So Donnie finally decided to open a souvenir shop.”

What followed, Stillman says, was “organic.” Much like the film’s fans drove the need for Lansing’s souvenir shop, their continued devotion to the movie drove the need to preserve the original site. “The baseball field used to be owned by two different families,” she explains. “When the filming was done, the other family, the Ameskamps (whose land encompassed part of the outfield), wanted to plow up the grass and put their crops back in; however, there was a huge outcry about destroying the field, so it was put back in.”

And it grew in popularity. In the 1990s, the “ghost players” from the movie suited up again to play games on Sundays and became a popular attraction; in that same year, the first pro/celebrity game was played. In 2007, the Ameskamps sold their land to Don and Becky Lansing, making the Lansings the sole owners of the baseball field. When they retired, they sold everything to Stillman.

Today, it welcomes over 100,000 visitors a year and is one of Iowa’s top tourist attractions. People visit from all over the country, but most come from within eight hours of the field, from states such as Missouri, Nebraska, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana. However, over the past several years, they’ve also had visitors from nine countries, mostly from Japan and Australia. Couples have gotten married on the field, and people have even asked to spread ashes of their loved ones there.

What makes it so special for so many? “It’s the only ball field in America where’s there’s



almost always a baseball game going on,” explains Stillman, who grew up a White Sox fan. “Everyone’s welcome—you just bring a glove. It’s America’s greatest pickup game of baseball, played for free, by people from all over the world.”

And, of course, visitors indulge in movie nostalgia. Many, for example, will disappear into the corn and walk back out onto the field in a nod to the ghost players in the movie. The cornfield itself is something of an agricultural feat, Stillman explains: “The really special thing about the crops is that all the rows of corn are planted facing home plate. So when you’re standing at home plate, you have a beautiful outfield fence of perfect corn rows to look into. This also makes it easier to find baseballs, as well as to find your way to the field if you get lost in the corn.”

Other visitors opt to sit in the bleachers—which are the originals from the movie, including the top bleacher where Kevin Costner’s character carved “Ray loves Annie”—and take photos of the field. Others

just sit under the trees taking in the beauty of a pristine, quiet ballpark.

In 2016, this nostalgic experience expanded to off the field: the Lansings’ farmhouse, which had been used in the movie, was transformed to look like the Kinsellas still lived there. “We’ve had lots of people come through the house, and they absolutely love being part of a place that’s truly historic from an American icon perspective,” Stillman says. “It brings people back to their favorite parts of the movie.”

Every September, the site also hosts Team of Dreams, a popular event for which visitors can purchase tickets to watch former major league players and celebrities play a charity game. Hall of Famers like Reggie Jackson, Ozzie Smith, and Wade Boggs play every year, and others like Ivan Rodriguez, Andre Dawson, Johnny Bench, Robin Yount, and Steve Carlton have played in the past. (“It’s something to see a Hall of Fame player get choked up by playing on the Field of Dreams,” Stillman notes.) Team of Dreams also includes a celebrity



“Everyone’s welcome—you just bring a glove. It’s America’s greatest pickup game of baseball, played for free, by people from all over the world.”

breakfast in neighboring Dubuque and Q and A sessions with the players.

In addition, during Father’s Day weekend in 2014, Costner came back to mark the movie’s twenty-fifth anniversary, as did Dwier Brown and Timothy Busfield (who play Ray’s father and brother-in-law, respectively, in the movie), and they all played ball with former pros and other celebrities, like Bob Costas.

Another exciting project is also on-deck for the site. “We’re building a beautiful baseball and softball campus called All-Star Ballpark Heaven on the northwest side of the property, totally separate from the Field of Dreams,” Stillman reveals. “It will house twenty-four smaller baseball fields that are replicas of ballparks long gone, like Ebbets Field and Forbes Field. These will

help younger people experience ballparks they didn’t get a chance to see in person, learn about baseball legends like Shoeless Joe Jackson and Joe DiMaggio, grow their love of the game, and teach them life skills during their week-long tournaments and training with us.”

These are all part of the experience that Stillman hopes to provide for the fans of the movie for years to come. “The most special moments I have are when people learn I manage the property,” she confides. “They lean in and hug me and sob. They just need to thank someone for preserving the field. Those are the people coming here to reconcile with someone they weren’t able to do so in this life, or they want to remember the bonds that baseball meant for them and their loved ones, usually a mom or dad. It’s a very interesting role to



play in America’s history by preserving this place, because it means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. It’s an honor and a privilege to maintain it.”

For Stillman, her continuing Field of Dreams Movie Site work has had a bigger purpose—and, much like the movie itself, it goes beyond the baseball diamond. “It’s taught me a lot of lessons about life,” she shares. “It’s taught me about the impact the game of baseball has on our culture and society, and, most important, the impact this movie has had on America and our ability to relate to each other as family.”

For more info, visit [fieldofdreamsmoviesite.com](http://fieldofdreamsmoviesite.com).






# art to feather

## Front of Tear Out Card 2

crispy avocado  
**TACOS**

2 c. rice crackers  
½ tsp. chili powder  
½ tsp. ground cumin  
½ tsp. garlic powder  
Salt and pepper, to taste  
2 large ripe, but firm, avocados  
16 small (6-inch) corn  
tortillas, warmed  
2 c. shredded cabbage  
½ small red onion, thinly sliced  
½ c. fresh cilantro leaves  
*(continued on other side)*







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## Back of Tear Out Card 2



serves 4-5

*(ingredients continued)*  
2 to 4 radishes,  
thinly sliced  
  
1 batch Creamy  
Garlic Dressing  
  
Hot sauce, for  
serving (optional)  
  
Lime wedges,  
for serving

1. Place the rice crackers  
in the bowl of a food  
processor. Blitz the crackers  
on high until they take on  
the texture of breadcrumbs.  
Pour the cracker crumbs  
out into a pie dish or other  
plate with a lip. Mix the  
chili powder, cumin, garlic  
powder, salt, and pepper  
into the cracker crumbs.

2. Cut the avocados in half  
lengthwise and extract the

pits. Cut the halves into  
quarters. Then, cut those  
quarters in half as well.  
You should have 16 wedges  
total. Carefully remove  
the peel from each  
avocado wedge.

3. Place the avocado wedges  
in the dish with the cracker  
crumbs, and carefully turn  
them over to coat with  
crumbs on all sides. Lightly  
press the crumbs into the  
avocado to make them stick.  
Once you have all wedges  
coated, transfer them to a  
clean plate.

4. For each taco, take one  
warm corn tortilla and lay  
an avocado wedge down

the middle. Pack a small  
amount of cabbage next to  
the avocado wedge. Scatter  
some red onion slices,  
cilantro leaves, and radish  
slices on top. Finish the taco  
with a drizzle of Creamy  
Garlic Dressing, some dabs  
of hot sauce if you like,  
and lime wedges.  
Enjoy immediately.

5. To get the Creamy Garlic  
Dressing recipe, visit  
[americanlifestylemag.com/  
crispy-tacos](http://americanlifestylemag.com/crispy-tacos).

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# Making a Connection

## Starts with an Introduction

**Initiating contact with new prospects and business opportunities is possible with the help of loyal customers like you.** Thank you for your trust in my business. Your continued support through referrals and recommendations is greatly appreciated.

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are the core of my business and always greatly appreciated.

*Thank you for your continued support!*



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