

Compliments of Stacey Shanner

Good to Be

issue 09

H O M E

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Make your mudroom *work for you*

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Stacey Shanner
Realtor®
Direct: (866) 458-4226



SHANNER
REALTY

The Shanners
1100 First Avenue
Suite 200
King Of Prussia, PA 19406

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Front of Tear Out Card 1

Spaghetti WITH LOBSTER

- 2 lobsters
- ¼ c. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 4–5 medium shrimp, shelled and deveined
- ½ c. white wine
- Salt, to taste
- 1 lb. thin spaghetti
- ½ c. minced parsley



Stacey Shanner
Realtor®

Direct: (866) 458-4226
Office: (610) 878-5000
E-mail: info@remindermedia.com
www.remindermedia.com


The Shanners
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King Of Prussia, PA 19406



Back of Tear Out Card 1

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and cook the lobsters until their shells turn bright red, about 10 minutes. Cut the lobsters in half, starting right behind the eyes, and moving toward the end of the tail. Remove the meat from the shells, reserving both. Chop the lobster meat.
2. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet and add the garlic and shrimp. Add the lobster and the white wine and cook until the wine has evaporated and the shrimp are opaque.
3. Meanwhile, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and cook the pasta until al dente. Drain the pasta and toss it in the skillet with the seafood for 1 minute. Divide the pasta among individual serving bowls, garnish with the lobster shells, and scatter parsley on top.



SERVES 4

©Serafina: Modern Italian Cuisine for Everyday Home Cooking by Vittorio Assaf and Fabio Granato. Text by Lavinia Branca Snyder. Rizzoli New York, 2022.
Photography ©Mark Roskams



Dear Bill and Judy,

Fall is a time for slowing down, reflecting, and embracing creature comforts. Whether you're looking forward to the changing leaves, seasonal adventures, or cozying up at home, this issue of Good to Be Home offers ways you can embrace the changes that this season brings.

Cleaning up fallen leaves and prepping plants for cool nights are the usual focal points of fall lawn-and-garden maintenance. However, if you're planning to plant throughout the season, you'll want to pay close attention to your soil quality. Check out the enclosed guide for helpful tips that can transform your soil from unfruitful to fertile.

Autumn is also a popular time for making aesthetic improvements to your home's exterior and interior. If you've been eager to hop on the trend of black window treatments, doors, and other design elements, the tips inside explain how to do so effectively. And with back-to-school season, the ideas for sprucing up your mudroom can help keep you and your family organized.

Speaking of back-to-school time, this season can be a particularly big adjustment for parents sending their children off to college. If you've recently become an empty-nester, you'll want to read about ways you can reclaim your space and make it work for this new lifestyle.

Take time to enjoy all the glorious changes that fall may bring for you and your home. As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

Stacey Shanner



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Realtor®

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E-mail: info@remindermedia.com
www.remindermedia.com

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CHARITIES

THAT MAKE

donating easy

written by: LAUREN KIM

If you want to get rid of furniture, small appliances, clothing, or other household items, there are charitable organizations that will not only accept these donations but also pick them up from your home, free of charge. With these services, you can declutter and contribute to a good cause at the same time. Plus, your donations might be tax-deductible. Check out these suggested charities for easy donating.

GOODWILL

The focus of this charity is to offer job training and employment-placement services for people in need. Goodwill sells the belongings you donate in its thrift stores. Contact your local Goodwill to find out if you can donate items curbside from your home. *For more information, visit goodwill.org.*

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY RESTORE

Habitat for Humanity uses the revenue from the goods sold in Habitat for Humanity ReStore thrift shops to build homes for low-income families. You can check online to find out if your local Habitat for Humanity ReStore can collect your donated building materials, furniture, small appliances, and other household items from your home. *For more information, visit habitat.org/restores.*

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

This charity uses proceeds from the sale of the used merchandise it receives to fund its charitable programs, which include advocacy and legal assistance for Vietnam veterans. Use pickupplease.org, email info@pickupplease.org, or call 1-800-775-VETS to see if a truck can retrieve your items. *For more information, visit pickupplease.org.*



Good to BeHOME

PUBLISHER

Chief Executive Officer Steven Acree
publisher@remindermedia.com

EXECUTIVE

President Luke Acree
Chief Marketing Officer Joshua Stike
Chief Operating Officer Michael Graziola

MARKETING

Director of Marketing Dan Acree
Director of Creative Services Kristin Sweeney
Brand Content Manager Jessica Fitzpatrick
marketing@remindermedia.com

EDITORIAL

Senior Layout Designer Jordan Hunsberger
Senior Editors Matthew Brady, Alexa Bricker
Content Writer Lauren Kim
Junior Content Writers Rachel Stevens, Nathan Smith
editorial@remindermedia.com

SALES AND CLIENT SUCCESS

Vice President of Client Success Ethan Acree
Vice President of Operations Nicholas Bianco
Vice President of Sales Michael Campanile
hello@remindermedia.com

OPERATIONS

Vice President of IT Thomas Setliff
Director of Projects Kelsie Schmall
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Director of Manufacturing Shannon Mosser
Vice President of Finance Shana Lebofsky
Director of HR John Keogh
hr@remindermedia.com



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issue 09



Budget-Friendly STAIRCASE UPGRADES

written by:
RACHEL STEVENS

Staircases, no matter their size, serve an important purpose—yet you might overlook yours when decorating. An appealing staircase can tie together your home’s aesthetic and make your trips up and down safer and more comfortable. The following upgrades are simple and affordable, and can be completed in an afternoon or over a weekend.

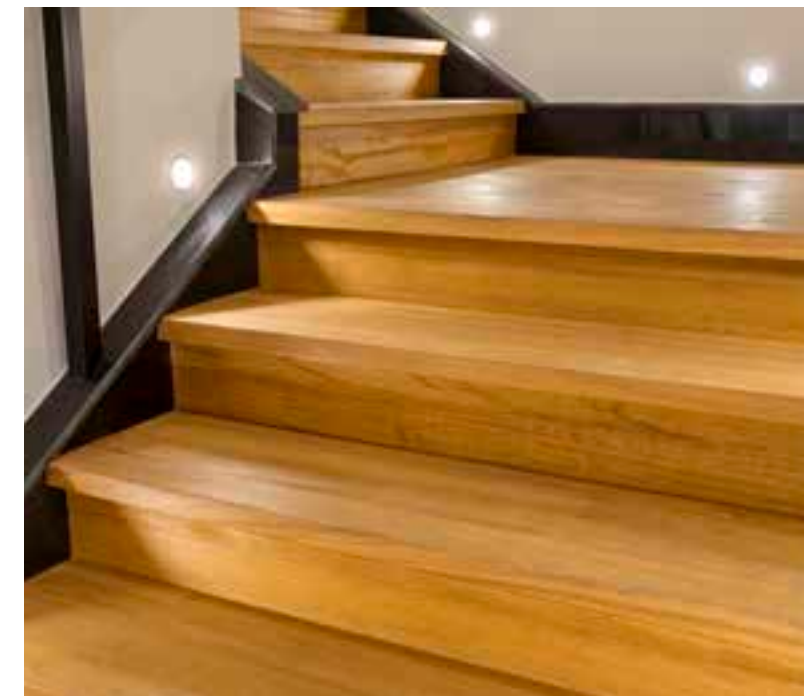
Hardwood staircases

A gorgeous hardwood staircase can be a statement by itself, but there are a few steps you can take to make your staircase stand out.

Paint or stain your treads and risers

There are two parts to every stair: the top tread and the riser underneath. Depending on the look you want, consider adding a fresh coat of paint to one or both parts. For a classic and elegant look, leave the treads unpainted and paint the risers a neutral, clean color. If you prefer a bold, playful look, paint the treads and risers a bright color that matches your home’s decor.

If you’re not planning to paint, wood refinishing is a tried-and-true way to give your stairs a new look. Be sure to test the stain on one tread first to make sure it dries in a way you like. You can always add another coat of stain, so start with one coat and



then layer as needed. Be sure to add an appropriate finish atop the stain. Typically, a clear, water-based polyurethane varnish is best for stairs.

Add a stair runner

Stair runners or rugs can elevate the look of your staircase and provide a layer of comfort for your feet. To find the right stair-runner length, measure the depth of the stair tread and the height of the riser, add them together, and then multiply the total by the number of stairs. When you place a runner, use a sticky back, like a pad or stair-safe glue, to prevent slippage or damage to your stairs.

Carpeted staircases

Carpeted stairs can add warmth to a home. However, if your carpet hasn’t been tended to in a while, it can make your stairs look dull and dated rather than cozy.

Remove the carpet

If your carpet isn’t your style anymore, you can easily replace it with hardwood. With most hardwood overlay systems,

you can measure, cut away the carpet, and install custom hardwood. There is typically no sanding, staining, or finishing required, which makes this a weekend project you can complete in no time.

Steam and clean the carpet

Alternatively, if you love your carpet, you should consider refreshing it with a professional steaming and cleaning—especially if your carpet is a light color. A deep clean will lift dirt, stains, and other imperfections to make it look as new as the day you moved in.

Handrails

In addition to your stair treads, handrails can have a big impact on the look of your staircase. If you decide to keep your existing handrails, you should still give them a good cleaning since they are prime spots for grime buildup.



Change the posts

Elegant or bold railing posts at the top and bottom of your staircase can help mark your style. Change your wood posts to iron ones for an industrial look, or to a different shape and size of wood post if you prefer something more traditional.

Swap the spindles

In between your posts, spindles—or balusters if you have no railing footing—keep the railing in place, so sturdy spindles or balusters are an important safety measure. There are several spindle and baluster options, including wood, iron, and cable. Find ones that are the same size as your current ones for an easy replacement if you’re not changing the railing above.

Upgrading your staircase is a worthwhile step up for your home’s value, comfort, and style.





written by: MATTHEW BRADY



FASHION LEGEND CHRISTIAN DIOR ONCE SAID, “YOU CAN WEAR BLACK AT ANY TIME. YOU CAN WEAR IT AT ANY AGE. YOU CAN WEAR IT FOR ALMOST ANY OCCASION. I COULD WRITE A BOOK ABOUT BLACK.” IN 2022, THIS LOVE OF BLACK IS BEING REFLECTED IN A DIFFERENT TYPE OF FASHION SENSE—IN AND ON ONE’S HOME.

You may have noticed this trend popping up around your neighborhood. Homeowners are adorning their places with not only black doors but also black treatments like shutters, window frames, and trims. This color craze has been gaining steam in recent years and shows no sign of slowing down. Black is timeless, after all.

But how can you add the darkest hue to your home without making it feel like the Addams Family lives there? Balance and intentionality are key, and the following tips can help you achieve the look you’re after.

EXTERIOR

By adding black to the outside of your home, you can easily accentuate its curb appeal and make it pop for those who walk or drive by. Fortunately, when it comes to the exterior, black shutters, frames, and doors will go well with just about any standard siding—white, cream, or gray vinyl, painted or natural red brick, and even stucco.

However, a new trend has emerged that has taken dark to an entirely different level: super modern all-black exteriors. If you are enamored of this idea, use caution since it may be too much of a good thing. For example, if you live in a warm-weather state, you likely won’t want your house encased in a heat-absorbing color. And if you live near the water, you should probably opt for a light, airy look.

INTERIOR

You can really go to town with this trend inside your home, as the opportunities to add splashes of black are plentiful. Here are just a few ways you can do so.

Accessories

Balancing a hint of black with neutral colors adds a touch of sophistication and sharpens the clean lines of a home. For example, black picture frames or art frames can make their subjects pop even more against a neutral wall. Black accessories, such as wire baskets in the kitchen or bathroom, can subtly upgrade a room. Best of all, black works with all kinds of materials and styles, from brass to wood and from modern to farmhouse.

Window frames and doors

If you love the idea of contrasting your light-colored walls with black, these areas may be a great place to try—especially if you’re restricted from doing so on the exterior of your home. Incorporating black trim into your windows has the same effect as the aforementioned photo frames, except, in this case, you’re framing your view of the outside. And painting a pantry door or a powder room door black makes a bold statement while highlighting the importance of the respective space.

Accent walls

Yes, you can dare to have a black accent wall. Paint one with intentionality, as it will automatically draw the eye and become the focal point of the room. Places to consider doing this include an office wall with a bookshelf and behind the headboard in a bedroom. If you have kids, you can take it one step further by using black chalkboard paint for their bedroom accent walls. No matter where you choose to add black, however, it’s sure to make the room more chic while also creating a wow factor.

When your children leave home and you're left with an empty nest, it is normal to experience sadness and mourn the days when you had a full house. But, while you might always miss having your kids around, you can now start enjoying your home for yourself and customize it to your needs and aesthetic.

feathering the Empty Nest

written by: LAUREN KIM

photography by: GETTY IMAGES, UNLESS NOTED

Jill Gruber, a corporate recruiter for a Fortune 500 company and part-time content creator for the blog *Doused in Pink*, felt feelings of loss when her daughter, Mikayla, now a student at the University of Rhode Island, left for college. But since becoming an empty-nester, Gruber and her husband, Dan, have purchased a home in a location they love in a northern Chicago suburb. They had moved away from the community when their daughter was in high school so she could swim competitively, and they were able to move back six years later, after their daughter's second year of college.

"We were fortunate to find a house in our former neighborhood that needed work, so we jumped on it, doing the renovations ourselves," Gruber says. "We gutted the kitchen and powder room, refinished the floors, and painted the entire main level. This time around, we have the freedom to style our home and make design choices that are just for us."

Terri Steffes, a teacher-development specialist for the University of Missouri and owner of the blogs *Our Good Life* and *Christmas Tree Lane*, moved to her current residence in Saint Charles, Missouri, after her husband, Bob, retired and her daughter, Ashley, got married. She decorated her home in a beachy style that she loves, created a home-office space—which she didn't have in her previous home—and made a Mizzou-themed TV room where she watches college football games.

She has filled her home with colors and finishes she wouldn't have used when her daughter was growing up. "I used decorating as a way to cope with the empty nest," she says. "I found great pleasure in purchasing items that I loved."



If you are looking to make your residence your own now that you have your home to yourself, consider these tips.

Personalize your space

With the kids away, you can use and decorate your entire home as you like. You could dedicate a spare bedroom to a particular purpose, such as crafting or exercising. If you have the budget, you can knock down walls and convert an extra room into a walk-in closet for your bedroom or use the space as an en suite bathroom.

Adapting your home to your new lifestyle can help you adjust to this new phase of life. You should think about your home as your space, Gruber advises. “You can envision the way you want to style it without being encumbered by trying to be kid-friendly or practical,” she says. “Another benefit of being empty-nesters is that if an idea strikes, we just grab some tools and start renovating.”

Gruber has a room ready for her daughter when she comes home on breaks, but the space doubles as a guest room when she’s away. Gruber has also converted a bedroom into a home office and another bedroom into a closet with custom storage.



Try new things

When your children were small, you might have chosen home furnishings for their durability. Now that your kids have left the nest, you have the freedom to pick what you like best instead of what can stand up to wear and tear. “I didn’t have to worry about things getting broken by having little kids around,” Steffes says.

Now, Steffes's living room is filled with light-colored linen furniture. She and her husband put a protective coating on their upholstery, but it’s to keep their dogs, not kids, from getting it dirty. The walls of her home are painted in a soft gray, and she has a beautiful plum color on the walls of her powder room. She couldn’t decorate in light colors when her daughter was small, she says, because she “didn’t want to worry about things getting dirty or stained.”



“Adapting your home to your new lifestyle can help you adjust to this new phase of life.”





Go outside

Don't forget to include outdoor spaces when updating your home for your new lifestyle. For instance, you might not need a big lawn now that your kids are grown. Steffes's backyard includes a deck, grill, patio, potting area for gardening, and firepit area with comfy seating.

"We have designed our yard to have very little grass," she says. "We have some grassy spots for our dogs, but all our other spaces are low maintenance. We garden mostly in pots, and I have a hydroponic garden. Our yard in this home is much easier to maintain, as it takes less than twenty minutes to mow, and we can use an electric mower, which is light and easy."

Living in place

If you want to make your empty nest your forever home, consider using durable materials that require little maintenance. Think about whether you want elements such as a main-floor bedroom or an accessible bathroom, and amenities like nonslip flooring, a wide door, and a walk-in shower or tub, which might come in handy someday.

When they designed their home, Steffes and her husband chose easy-to-use, long-lasting design elements that simplify their lives today and will help them stay in their home in the future, including a gas fireplace, luxury vinyl-plank floors, fingerprint-resistant appliances, and granite countertops. Now that she and her husband have a place for just the two of them, they want to enjoy it as much as possible.

Consider moving

It can be hard to leave the home your children grew up in, but relocating to a new home can be a good way to open the door to a new and exciting stage of your life. Steffes's home is in an ideal location for her and her husband—it's close to their jobs and is in a waterfront community with restaurants, coffee shops, and grocery stores, all within walking distance. "Our son-in-law, Eric, named our home Lakeside Resort for all the fun activities that take place in our community," Steffes says.

When your children leave the nest, try not to think of it as an ending but as the beginning of a fun new period in your life. With the extra time and freedom you have, you can create the home you've always dreamed of.



MAKE YOUR MUDROOM WORK FOR YOU

written by:
RACHEL STEVENS

Whether you have a mudroom that needs an upgrade or want to create one, planning the details of your materials and storage ahead of time can help this room work well for your household.

SIZE AND LOCATION

These factors should be the first considerations to ensure that your mudroom is convenient and suits your needs. A mudroom can be any size, but be sure to consider these points.

Small and compact

Small mudrooms can pose a design challenge, but creativity is key to assembling a neat system that can address a variety of needs.

Fashioning a compact mudroom in your home requires thinking about several elements. For example, when would you use the mudroom most often? And where do you most frequently enter and exit your home? Most people share their mudroom with a laundry room or garage, and these two locations make the most sense for convenience. However, if these areas are already full, try a spot near your door or next to a coat closet.

Large and spacious

Having a whole room or section of your home to decorate as a mudroom can be overwhelming, and it can be tough to know where to start. But a large mudroom can be worth the setup if you have a busy household with children and pets because it will allow everyone to have a dedicated spot for their belongings.

A large area in your home, such as a hallway between the garage and interior or a sunroom, can make for a suitable mudroom.



MADE-TO-LAST MATERIALS

Mud is in the name of this room, so expect that your belongings will track in elements from the outside. Select materials that can stand up to dirt and grime by considering your habits and lifestyle.

Steel

If you have a garage mudroom or want an industrial look, a steel locker or shelving unit is the best choice. Steel holds up against moisture and mud with minimal rusting or staining. Once a week, wipe down steel materials with a surface cleaner to keep them looking new.

Bamboo

To create a mudroom that looks natural and warm, consider bamboo. It's a sturdy yet budget-friendly material, so bamboo cabinetry, benches, and hooks can hold up to your toughest

messes. Bamboo is also porous—it soaks in water and dries naturally—so you won't have to deal with puddles of rainwater.

Washable textiles

Any cloth, canvas, or rug materials in your mudroom should be washable. Invest in high-quality pieces that won't need frequent replacing. Your shoes, coats, and other odds and ends will almost inevitably stain and soil these materials, so it's convenient to throw them in the wash as needed.

Matte finishes

If you use wood in your mudroom, be sure to paint or seal it since wood can rot when exposed to the elements. A coat of matte paint can protect the wood and offers camouflage for dirt, whereas a glossy finish will highlight dirty spots.

ORGANIZATION

Once you decide on your location and choose your materials, it's time to determine how to organize your mudroom.

Shelving and cubbies

Cubbies are perfect for shoes, and open shelving is ideal for holding baskets for hats, gloves, water bottles, and other miscellaneous items. Keep your shoe cubbies at foot level and your shelves with baskets at eye level so you don't have to pick up dirty shoes or struggle to reach and put away small items.

Benches

A bench is a mudroom must-have because it gives you a spot to sit and place your bags while putting shoes on and taking them off. Consider a storage bench if you have a compact space, which can serve a dual purpose without taking up too much of the room. If your bench doesn't have built-in storage, you can place a few baskets underneath it.

Hanging storage

Hooks typically serve as a storage spot for jackets and umbrellas. While you should include hooks for those items, mail baskets, keys, and other small belongings fit nicely on them too. Install hooks and hanging baskets to serve as catchall storage so that you can locate these items with ease when you need them.

The most important benefit of your mudroom is what it can do to make your life a bit easier. By applying these tips, you can pick the perfect layout, materials, and storage to make this part of your home a total success.



A HOME *in the* WOODS



interview with: JESSICA P.

written by: MATTHEW BRADY

photography by: JESSICA P.

Making her childhood dream a reality, Jessica P. and her husband ditched their life in Las Vegas to build a home in a Pacific Northwest forest, an ongoing project they lovingly call Pacific Pines Ranch.

How did this project come to be? It's always been my dream to have a big property in the forest, so my husband and I decided on a radical life change: find a piece of land and build a house. While researching, we learned about shipping-container projects done overseas. We thought it was such a cool idea and figured, "Why not? You only live once." We can work from anywhere because we're both self-employed, so we left Las Vegas in a camper van, toured the country for about a year looking for a piece of land to call home, and found this place in Oregon.

Did you have any fabrication skills before you started? None. I didn't even know how to use a drill before we started. We learn everything as we go. That's the power of the internet.

So you've taught yourselves through the internet? Yes. If we need help on something specific, we'll ask friends who know about fabrication and building, but, other than that, we've mostly researched online, gone through some trial and error, practiced, and used the skills we learned. Our family and friends think we're crazy but in a good way. They're shocked that we're capable of doing something like this.

Was it difficult obtaining permits, considering that you're building a nonconventional home? No, it was actually easy. In Oregon, if you're in a small town and the



home is structurally sound, you can generally build in a nonconventional style. For example, there are a lot of cob houses in Oregon.

Where do you get your containers? You can get them anywhere in the US, but the closer you are to a major port and a large city, or even a railway system, the easier it will be to have them shipped to your property. We got ours from Portland and had them delivered by truck to where we are.

What was the excavation process like? The land was like a jungle. The plant life here is tenacious and strong, and the forest hadn't been touched for hundreds of years; we have trees that are six to eight feet in diameter. So it was hard

to figure out how to clear everything out, make a building site, and create the road to the property. That was one of the few times when we had to hire somebody because we didn't have the experience to do the excavation and there wasn't any margin for error. That said, we've been able to use the excavated trees a lot in our build. We even bought a chainsaw mill to get the most use out of the wood.

Does the Pacific Northwest weather affect this project? Our life revolves around the weather. We started working on the foundation in June 2018, but we've only actually built for about a year and a half because everything would come to a halt in winter; it's so humid and rainy.



Did you always want to document this project, or did that happen organically? That happened organically. I don't know why I never thought of doing it. I recorded everything—all our travels and when we first got here—but I had only been taking pictures of the house and the build to show my family and friends. They encouraged me to make videos for people to see, and I took their advice.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using steel containers for a home? The biggest pro is their strength. Also, they're very much modular units: you can add to them. For example, on our second level, we added forty

feet of glass doors and windows, which you probably couldn't do with a standard home. A big con would be corrosion. If you don't manage that, it can be a big problem, depending on where you live. Logistics, such as having everything transported, can also be tricky and make things take longer.

What are your most important tools? Definitely the angle grinder and the welder. A third would probably be the airless sprayer because we paint so often. We don't have a variety of tools, but we use them a lot. We make a good team because I will mainly do the welding and my husband will do the cutting and grinding. When we're done, we'll share the

task of cleaning the steel. We try to keep the workload balanced so we don't get burned out.

How many hours do you put in each day? I would say, on average, a good twelve hours—and some days it's much more. We also make sure we have days set aside to get chores done like laundry and dishes.

How big will Pacific Pines Ranch be when it's done? The house will be around 3,000 square feet on four acres of land.





What's next? Now that we have the containers up, we'll seal them. Once all that is situated, we'll focus on the interior and work on the framing, drywall, electricity, plumbing, and floors. After that, we'll have appliances installed on the inside, and we will finally be able to enjoy using those after all this time. Having a dishwasher will totally change my life. *[Laughs]*

What have been the biggest challenges and greatest rewards of this project? The biggest

challenges are definitely mental because seeing all the things you have to do, while knowing the time it takes to do them, can break you down. The biggest rewards are discovering what you're capable of doing with a little bit of ambition and hard work and seeing the project come together. It's like doing a long-distance race.

Can you put into words what this project means to you? It makes me proud to see how far we've come and

happy that we're able to build our dream house ourselves with our own hands and live our dream life out in the woods. It's been a very life-changing, empowering experience, especially because there aren't a lot of women in construction.

When this is all done, what do you look forward to doing in your new house? I can't wait to relax on the rooftop deck and enjoy the sunset. I also look forward to other simple things such as having a coffee or having friends over

and spending time with them while taking in the beauty of the surrounding area. It's already incredible to see the trees and wildlife from the second floor, and when the fog rolls through, I feel like I'm in a fairy tale.

For more info, follow @pacificpinesranch on YouTube and Instagram



quality tips for Quality Soil

written by: NATHAN SMITH

The ground under your feet is more than just dirt—soil is the foundation for growing bountiful vegetables, lush plants, and a thick lawn. However, if your yard's soil quality is low, it can be a struggle to grow anything at all. Use these tips to help your yard flourish.

Test Your Soil

Growing plants successfully may come down to your soil's pH level. You can measure it with a soil test kit, which can be purchased online or at your local garden center. The pH level of soil will fall between zero and fourteen, with seven being considered neutral. The USDA states anything between six and seven is favorable for plant growth. Soil with a pH level below seven is acidic, while a level above seven is alkaline. An imbalance in either direction can affect your soil's ability to support the growth of plants. Overly acidic soil creates deficiencies in specific nutrients, such as calcium and magnesium, while the concentrations of manganese and aluminum may become toxic for plants. Alkaline soil can cause iron deficiency in plants. There are several products you can add to your soil to improve its pH. For acidic soil, add limestone or wood ash, and for alkaline soil, add sulfur or aluminum sulfate. If you'd prefer not to tamper with your soil, a variety of plants thrive in acidic and alkaline soils. Try growing azaleas, rhododendrons, and blueberries in acidic soil, and lavender, honeysuckle, and forsythia if your soil is alkaline.

A soil test will also tell you about the levels of certain nutrients in your soil, such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. This information can help you plan the appropriate course of action. For example, you can increase nitrogen by adding blood meal or alfalfa meal, increase phosphorus by adding bone meal or rock phosphate, and boost potassium by adding greensand or kelp meal.

Add Organic Matter

Regardless of the type of soil you have, organic matter will help improve it by adding nutrients while enhancing its structure and water-holding capabilities. One of the most common sources of organic matter is one many gardeners are familiar with: compost. You can either buy compost or create your own. The best ingredients for your compost include leaves, brush trimmings, wood chips, and nonanimal kitchen scraps. Other sources





of organic matter include aged manure and grass clippings. Organic mulch is another option that slowly decomposes, adding organic matter to the soil while keeping it moist and preventing weed growth.

Aerate Your Yard

If the soil in your yard is compacted, passages that provide water, oxygen, and nutrients to the roots can become restricted. Aeration can be achieved by loosening the soil to deliver nutrients to the roots. Aerators fall into two categories: plug and spike. Spike aerators use pointed tines to drive tiny holes into your soil and are a good choice for mild compaction. Plug aerators use hollow tines that remove larger plugs of soil and work best in highly compacted soil or larger plots. Try to limit foot traffic in the areas you have aerated to avoid further compaction.

Rotate Crops

If you have a fruit or vegetable garden, it can be helpful to rotate what you're growing between different plots. You can use this same strategy with annuals. By continually growing the same crop in the same spot, nutrients may deplete after a few seasons. Rotating crops can also prevent the damage caused by disease and pests. Limit growing the same crop or a crop from the same plant family in the same spot to once every three or four years.

Add Raised Beds

If you're still struggling to grow plants in your yard after following these tips, you may need to go up instead of down. An excellent way to overcome poor soil quality is to avoid it altogether by adding raised beds to your yard. This option allows you to create an area to grow plants where you can control the soil, and adding a mix of garden soil and compost will likely set you up for success. Choose a spot for your bed that receives at least six hours of sunlight a day, add mulch after planting, and avoid walking on your beds for the best result.



Put your beds in a spot with sufficient sunlight.



an at-home Fine-Dining experience

The flavors of Italian food, from pasta and seafood to rich chocolate, are anything but boring. Centered around the farm-to-table philosophy of Italy's culinary traditions, *Serafina: Modern Italian Cuisine for Everyday Home Cooking* offers recipes that honor the past while embracing modern ingredients.

recipes by: VITTORIO ASSAF AND FABIO GRANATO photos by: MARK ROSKAMS

Spaghetti with lobster / **SERVES 4**

The Mediterranean is home to a host of different types of lobsters, and lobster has been a popular food since ancient times. Greek terracotta vases and mosaics from the Roman Empire depict lobster-fishing techniques, including the use of lobster pots made of woven reeds.

Ingredients:

2 lobsters

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 cloves garlic, minced

4–5 medium shrimp, shelled
and deveined

½ cup white wine

Salt, to taste

1 pound thin spaghetti

½ cup minced parsley

Instructions:

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and cook the lobsters until their shells turn bright red, about 10 minutes. Cut the lobsters in half, starting right behind the eyes, and moving toward the end of the tail. Remove the meat from the shells, reserving both. Chop the lobster meat.
2. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet and add the garlic and shrimp. Add the lobster and the white wine and cook until the wine has evaporated and the shrimp are opaque.
3. Meanwhile, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and cook the pasta until al dente. Drain the pasta and toss it in the skillet with the seafood for 1 minute. Divide the pasta among individual serving bowls, garnish with the lobster shells, and scatter parsley on top.



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Photography ©Mark Roskams

Arugula and Filetto *salad* / **SERVES 4**

This classic dish allows both the tender, sweet beef and the peppery arugula to shine brightly, as their flavors are layered but not comingled.

Ingredients:

2 pounds filet mignon

Extra-virgin olive oil for sautéing and dressing

Salt, to taste

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

7 ounces arugula

16 cherry tomatoes

½ cup Parmigiano Reggiano shavings

Leaves of 1 small head Belgian endive

Instructions:

1. Slice the filet mignon. In a skillet, heat some olive oil and cook the filet to your preferred doneness. Season with salt and black pepper.
2. In a bowl, toss the arugula with the cherry tomatoes. Dress with a little olive oil, toss to combine, then arrange in the center of a platter. Top the arugula with Parmigiano shavings, then arrange the filet mignon and the endive leaves on the platter.





Chocolate *tartufo* / **SERVES 4**

The ice cream truffle was invented in 1952 by gelataio Giuseppe De Maria in the small seaport town of Pizzo in the Calabria region. His chocolate and hazelnut ice cream coated in cocoa powder has IGP [Indication of Geographic Protection] status and is the region's most celebrated dessert.

Ingredients:

1¾ cups vanilla ice cream

¾ cup chopped milk chocolate

10 chocolate wafer cookies, crushed

¾ cup semisweet chocolate chips

1 cup cocoa powder

Instructions:

1. Allow the ice cream to soften at room temperature for about 10 minutes, but do not let it melt completely. As soon as it is malleable, work in ½ cup of the chopped milk chocolate. Using an ice cream scoop, prepare 4 ice cream balls (or 8, if you prefer to serve 2 smaller truffles per person) and roll them in the crushed cookies until completely coated. Wrap the ice cream balls in wax paper and freeze for 3 hours.
2. When the ice cream balls are frozen, bring 1 inch of water to a simmer in a saucepan over medium heat. Place the chocolate chips and the remaining milk chocolate in a metal or heatproof bowl and place the bowl on the pot of simmering water to melt. Stir the chocolate occasionally as it softens. Remove from the heat when only a few pieces are left, as they will melt from the residual heat.
3. Remove the ice cream balls from the freezer and pour the melted chocolate all over them, making sure to coat all sides.
4. Return the balls to their wax paper. Freeze for 2 to 3 hours.
5. About 10 to 15 minutes before you plan to serve the truffles, remove them from the freezer and sprinkle the cocoa powder on top. Let them sit at room temperature until you are ready to serve them.



ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR *Preserving* YOUR RUGS

written by: NATHAN SMITH

Rugs can be a decorating focal point for nearly any room, with many styles, patterns, and colors available to match your home's personality. However, you will need to take time to give your rugs some TLC to make them last.

KNOW YOUR RUG

Before you do any type of maintenance on your rug, check the label for special cleaning instructions or precautions you should take. Rugs can be made of various weaves and materials, and each style has specific care instructions. If you're unsure of the proper cleaning method, contact a cleaning company to deep-clean your rug. You should have your rugs deep-cleaned every twelve to eighteen months, but you may want to schedule more frequent cleanings for rugs in high-traffic areas.

VACUUM REGULARLY

You should vacuum your rugs thoroughly at least once a week. However, rugs in high-traffic areas or those exposed to pets may require more frequent vacuuming. If your rugs are made of delicate material or are antiques, it's better to vacuum them with an upholstery attachment to reduce the risk of damage. If you have a shag rug, disengage the beater bar or use an upholstery attachment to prevent tangling. Use caution when vacuuming any fringes—carefully use a nozzle attachment, and periodically lift the edges to clean dirt to prevent it from transferring to the fringes. You can take smaller rugs outside and either shake off any dirt buildup or beat them vigorously to remove excess grit.

MOVE YOUR RUGS

Rotating your rugs every six months helps protect them from excessive wear. Moving your rugs will also help reduce the effects of sunlight—direct sunlight can cause the colors of your rugs to fade over time. If you keep furniture on your rug, be sure to place rug protectors under each leg. You should also rearrange your furniture regularly to create new paths for foot traffic and to avoid flattening your rug's pile, which is the density of the fibers.



ADD PROTECTION

A quality rug pad will not only improve the safety of your rugs but also extend their longevity. As good as your rugs may look, they can become a hazard thanks to slippage and bunching. However, you can prevent these dangers by adding a nonslip rug pad that keeps it in place. A rug pad will also protect your floor from scratches and dye transfer. Rug pads can even add cushioning to thinner rugs to provide comfort, and some will absorb sound. Most pads work on bare floors like hardwood. If you have rugs on top of carpet, make sure you choose a rug pad designed for carpeted areas.



DYNAMIC DESIGN *and Nuanced Neutrals*

interview with: TRACY MORRIS

written by: ALEXA BRICKER

photography by: GREG POWERS



Designer Tracy Morris doesn't just create beautiful spaces; she also combines the best lighting, exquisite architecture, and pops of personality to make magic happen for her clients. Here Morris explains how she adapted her process for her home renovation in McLean, Virginia.

What did your journey to interior designer look like?

I have always had a passion for design, but even more so, color and construction. At any job I had between 1999 and 2003, the people I worked with would ask if I could select the colors for their home and help them hang their pictures. When I got laid off in 2003, I thought, "It's either I do it or don't." So I did it, and I've had my company for almost twenty years now.

How do you start the process for a new home design?

My primary focus is construction. For 90 percent of my clients, I start with a flat piece of land. I work with their architect, builder, and landscape architect to be the concierge, if you will, between the worlds of construction and design.



My clients either come to me with a piece of land and need help assembling a team, or I will get a call from an architect or builder asking for help with their client. From there, we create the design schematics or concept drawings and figure out what special pieces the client has, whether it be art, furniture, a dining room table, or rugs. We look at everything the client owns to see how it will suit the architecture plan. After construction begins, about nine months prior to the client moving in, we start selecting furniture. The entire process takes between two and three years.

What is the biggest difference between designing for clients and renovating your home? I tell my clients that I'm their style guide. I'm not there to make their house look like mine. For my house, designing is a culmination of the pieces I've collected over the years. I like things fairly neutral, quiet, and calm in my home, but a client might want an orange pillow or something that fits their style a little bit

better. For my house, when I see something that I love, I tend to go ahead and implement it.

Did you design and build your home from scratch or renovate an existing home? There were three spec homes on the street where we lived, and the builders asked me to help select the interior and exterior colors. My husband and I later realized that we did not have enough space for my office, which had been outside my house for years. We ended up purchasing a house that I had already picked the colors for! *[Laughs]* The entire lower level, which is about 3,000 square feet, is used for my office.

Your home has a very inviting feel in the entryway. What were some of your design considerations to create this effect? I have always been a fan of having a foyer and a foyer chest so that you can put down keys or hide gloves or anything of that nature. I knew I wanted the chest to be light



and bright and airy. I'm also a huge fan of rugs, so the addition of the antique Oushak rug was very important. Lighting is crucial, too, and is truly art for your house. The light fixture in the entryway is from Urban Electric, and I customized the colors in order to bring in the dark black that matches the windows on the outside, along with warm gold.

It seems like black or dark-colored window frames are growing in popularity. Are you a fan of this style? Absolutely. A lot of people are actually taking that black window mullion from the outside and putting it inside to create a true modern farmhouse look.

You like to keep things neutral, but there are subtle dark accents in many of your rooms. What is your technique for combining light and dark design elements? Typically the rule is two-thirds, one-third. If you want a lighter space to maintain brightness, you can do a third dark. For example, in my living room, I used a deep-colored wallpaper but the sofa and rug are white. The chairs, which are smaller pieces, are also a little bit darker. So two-thirds of the room is light, and the other third is dark.

The architecture of your home, particularly of the ceilings, is so interesting. Did you make any changes to them, or were these architectural finishes already in place? All the ceiling treatments were planned prior to me moving in. The builder does this to create a much more well-rounded and detailed house. The exposed beams in the primary bedroom were already there, and I worked my colors around that. I did the same thing in the family room with the coffered ceiling and the dining room that has the triple tray ceiling. With those elements in place, I didn't have to do anything additional to the design of the ceilings.





How do you inject comfort and warmth into spaces while maintaining a neutral and sophisticated look?

It's all about proportions and strength of tones. In my dining room, if the wallpaper was super white and the table was the same tone, it would feel a little bit off. The idea is to have the same strength of tone. If you have a deep-colored table, you want to make sure the wallpaper in the space has the same level of depth. In my living room, for example, the wallpaper and chairs have the same level of depth.

You already mentioned the light fixture in the entryway, but I noticed there are a lot of other unique fixtures throughout the rest of the home. At what point in the design process is lighting considered?

The lighting is planned along with all the other architectural details. If we're working on the ceiling treatments, we are also definitely laying out the lighting. We figure out where the specialty lighting will be, and then we get into what that fixture will look like.

What was your favorite room to design in your home? *[Laughs]* Honestly, it was the butler's pantry. That was

a pandemic project. One of the designers in my office, Maha, looked at me one day and said, "You know what? Let's add that wallpaper we love to this space!" To be honest with you, the butler's pantry was really plain with beige paint beforehand. The cabinets were there, but there weren't any special features. I've always loved this wallpaper—it's from the Phillip Jeffries Fretwork collection. We already had the black on the foyer fixture, so I thought, "Let's just do it." It's a great butler's pantry now, and everyone is a little shocked but pleased when they see it.

What are you most looking forward to in the next year?

I'm fortunate to have so many projects coming up in unique places. The construction journey is not just about building a house. I learn something about myself in every house I design, but my clients are also on a personal journey and figuring out what's important to them, what they love, and what they don't need. That journey is very important to me.

For more info, visit tracymorrisdesign.com

help at your **DISPOSAL**

written by: MATTHEW BRADY

Of all life's modern conveniences, garbage disposals tend to fall into the "out of sight, out of mind" category and aren't usually appreciated until something goes wrong. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to prevent such problems. By properly maintaining your garbage disposal, you can help ensure that your food scraps continue to tidily disappear for years to come.

everyday ways to care

Prevention is key to a working disposal, and the things you do daily can affect its performance and life span.

- **Be wary of what you put in it.** Never add items such as eggshells, seafood shells, coffee grounds, fibrous produce like celery and pumpkin, and large quantities of any food. (Potato skins and pasta can get particularly messy.) But the worst foods for your disposal are greasy, clog-inducing ones, such as butter, oil, and even peanut butter.
- **Use only cold water in the disposal, especially if it's clogged.** Hot water often melts fat-based items in your disposal and drain, and it can make food like pasta expand.
- **Never use the disposal without the water running.** Water acts as a lubricant for all the messy food it eliminates. That's why it's also a good idea to keep water flowing for ten to fifteen seconds after grinding to flush foods away from your disposal.

maintenance tips

When you smell an odor emanating from your drain, it may be the drain itself. But it's more likely coming from inside your disposal, where food can accumulate. Proper cleaning and maintenance can help prevent this and keep the disposal running effectively.

1. Be sure to turn the power off by unplugging the disposal or turning off its circuit breaker.
2. Focus on the flap right at the top of the drain, cleaning it thoroughly with soap and water. Then use a flashlight to see where the food is at the bottom and around the edges of the disposal's interior. Use tongs to prevent your fingers from going into your disposal as you're grabbing food.
3. Turn the power back on. To clean the blades, fill the disposal with ice, top it with one cup of salt, and let it run with cold water for ten to fifteen seconds or until the ice is ground up.
4. Add a half cup of baking soda and one cup of vinegar, let the concoction clean for several minutes, and rinse with warm water to give the disposal a thorough, natural cleaning.
5. Grind several citrus peels to give your unit a pleasant aroma.

For all that you put into your home,
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most OUT.



Stacey Shanner, Realtor®

The Shanners
1100 First Avenue Suite 200
King of Prussia, PA 19406
info@remindermedia.com

(866) 458-4226

Front of Tear Out Card 2

CHOCOLATE *Tartufo*

1¾ c. vanilla ice cream
¾ c. chopped milk chocolate
10 chocolate wafer cookies, crushed
¾ c. semisweet chocolate chips
1 c. cocoa powder



Stacey Shanner
Realtor®

Direct: (866) 458-4226
Office: (610) 878-5000
E-mail: info@remindermedia.com
www.remindermedia.com


The Shanners
1100 First Avenue
Suite 200
King Of Prussia, PA 19406



Back of Tear Out Card 2

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Allow the ice cream to soften at room temperature for about 10 minutes, but do not let it melt completely. As soon as it is malleable, work in ½ cup of the chopped milk chocolate. Using an ice cream scoop, prepare 4 ice cream balls (or 8, if you prefer to serve 2 smaller truffles per person) and roll them in the crushed cookies until completely coated. Wrap the ice cream balls in wax paper and freeze for 3 hours.
2. When the ice cream balls are frozen, bring 1 inch of water to a simmer in a saucepan over medium heat. Place the chocolate chips and the remaining milk chocolate in a metal or heatproof bowl and place the bowl on the pot of simmering water to melt. Stir the chocolate occasionally as it softens. Remove from the heat when only a few pieces are left, as they will melt from the residual heat.
3. Remove the ice cream balls from the freezer and pour the melted chocolate all over them, making sure to coat all sides.
4. Return the balls to their wax paper. Freeze for 2 to 3 hours.
5. About 10 to 15 minutes before you plan to serve the truffles, remove them from the freezer and sprinkle the cocoa powder on top. Let them sit at room temperature until you are ready to serve them.



SERVES 4

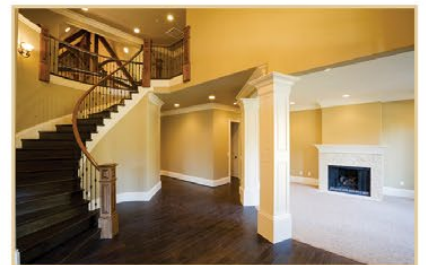
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Stacey Shanner
The Shanners
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Suite 200
King Of Prussia, PA 19406

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