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PERCENT

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86
PERCENT

of readers have taken an action that has benefited the sender's business as a result of reading the magazine.

40
PERCENT

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46
MINUTES

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3-4
WEEKS

80
PERCENT

of readers are more likely to do business with the professional who sent them the magazine than one who does not.



*Stats from 2019 GfK Reader Survey

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Check out the **six customizable places** in this magazine:



1 front cover



2 front inside cover



3 front tear out card



4 back tear out card



5 back inside cover



6 back outside cover

Compliments of Stacey Shanner

AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

THE MAGAZINE CELEBRATING LIFE IN AMERICA

ISSUE 120



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FROM SOUP
to nuts

Plant-based recipes perfect for winter.

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spectacular stargazing sites | 18



1 front cover

Choose from a variety of premade cover designs, then just put your headshot photo, contact information, and logo on the front so recipients know right away who sent them this gift in the mail!



AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

Dear Bill and Judy,

Sometimes life gives you lemons and throws curveballs at the same time. The last couple of years have been a global lesson in patience and perseverance. Other battles are not as universal, but finding community to lean on can make all the difference. This issue of American Lifestyle magazine highlights organizations and people working to create supportive spaces for their fellow humans.

SHARE, a nonprofit based in New York City, connects women who are facing breast, ovarian, or uterine cancer. Its 24-hour national helpline is available for anyone who needs an empathetic ear. It also hosts biweekly support groups that offer advice and community for both cancer patients and their caregivers.

Casting for Recovery is another organization established to support women, specifically those dealing with breast cancer. Its two-and-a-half-day retreats allow women to reconnect with nature and teach them how to fly-fish in beautiful locations across the country. The connections made during this time often result in lifelong friendships.

Siblings Bradford and Bryan Manning were both diagnosed with Stargardt disease, a rare eye condition that causes blindness. Recognizing their need for a smoother shopping experience and wanting to make a difference, they launched Two Blind Brothers, an apparel line with ultra-soft clothes and tags in braille. All of the proceeds are donated to finding a cure for blindness.

Whether in-person or virtually, reaching out for support and community helps us all stay connected. As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

Stacey Shanner



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Each issue includes a prewritten letter alongside your contact information. But if you want to add a personal touch, you can always customize your letter as much as you want—you can even write a separate one to each recipient!

front of card:

SWEET CARROT
halva

- 14 oz. carrots
- 1 pinch salt
- 4 tbsp. maple syrup
- 3 tbsp. light tahini + more to serve
- ½ tsp. ground cardamom
- 1 pinch bourbon vanilla powder
- ¼ c. white cane sugar
- ¼ c. sesame seeds



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back of card:



SERVES 4

1. Bring a small amount of water to a gentle boil in a medium saucepan. Finely slice the carrots and cook in the gently simmering water for 20 minutes until very soft.
2. Drain the carrots in a sieve and purée with the salt until creamy. Mix in the maple syrup and tahini and flavor with the cardamom and vanilla powder. Divide the halva between bowls and set aside.
3. To prepare for making the sesame brittle, line a large plate with parchment paper. Cook the white cane sugar in a small nonstick pan over moderate to high heat. As soon as the sugar begins to melt (at first it will melt slowly, but this soon speeds up), let it caramelize, while stirring constantly with a wooden spoon. Remember, both the pan and the liquid caramel are too hot to use a rubber spatula or to allow tasting. Quickly stir in the sesame seeds and as soon as they begin to color, pour the mixture onto the lined plate and spread out thinly. After about 10 minutes, the brittle will be firm and can be broken into pieces.
4. Crumble the sesame brittle over the halva and serve each portion with a blob of tahini.

TIP: Halva also tastes great chilled and can easily be prepared a few hours or even days in advance. It will keep covered in the refrigerator for about 4 days.

Recipes taken from Let's Go Nuts by Estella Schweizer (Prestel, April 2022).
Photography by Winfried Heintz.

We have hundreds of designs available, from recipes to home tips, that will display your contact information on the front. You can also choose to create a customized design. This 4" x 6" card is displayed in the front and can be easily torn out to save or pass on to others.



magazine content

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The 48 pages within American Lifestyle include topics in the categories of interior design, recipes, home, travel, and general interest.

After these pages, you will find your second customizable tear out card along with the two back cover spaces!



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magazine content



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POP ROCKS

written by **shelley goldstein** | photography as noted

Just twenty-five minutes south of the Las Vegas Strip sits *Seven Magic Mountains*, a colorful public art installation in the Mojave Desert. Created by Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone, this Instagrammer paradise features seven towers of vividly hued boulders stacked on top of each other, with each tower measuring thirty to thirty-five feet high. Rondinone considers the display, which has been visited by over a million people, a creative expression of human presence in the desert. The exhibit opened in May 2016 and was only slated to be on view for two years, but its popularity with visitors continues to inspire plans for longer extensions.

For more info, visit sevenmagicmountains.com



leaves in the stream

IT WAS CURIOSITY THAT SPARKED JENNY TSE'S INITIAL INTEREST IN TEA—THE SAME CURIOSITY THAT HAS HELPED HER TO BUILD HER WORLD-RENOWNED BUSINESS, SIPPING STREAMS TEA COMPANY.

written by alexa bricker | photography courtesy of jenny tse



Jenny Tse was born in Hong Kong but made the journey to Fairbanks, Alaska, with her mother when she was just one month old. Her father had immigrated some years earlier to work as a chef during the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, and he eventually opened his own restaurant.

In her family's early days in the United States, Tse's grandparents would take turns babysitting her and her younger sister. "My grandfather had a ritual every morning: tai chi, a Chinese tea ceremony, and then a walk," Tse shares. "One morning while he was out for his walk, my sister dared me to take a sip from the cup he left on the table. I didn't even know it was tea, but I remember thinking it was pretty good."

Tse was an avid coffee drinker for years before she steeped her toes into the world of tea, but she was very familiar with different types of local herbs and plants thanks to time she spent with her mother. "As a child, I would help my mom collect different botanicals that we would dry on tarps, and then we would take them to a meeting place where other people would sell



their goods," she says. "I didn't even think about it until after I started my tea company!" *[Laughs]*

Despite all this early exposure to tea, the spark that ignited Tse's interest didn't develop until her time at the Boise State University while studying sports medicine. After reading case studies on various rehab techniques,

Each issue of American Lifestyle features 48 pages of content that appeal to a large audience. The articles inside change with every bimonthly issue and are ready to go—no need for you to worry about writing content to put inside your magazine!



“WHEN I FLEW TO THE VERY FIRST TEA FARM, I REALIZED THAT LANDSCAPE WAS WHAT MY FATHER SAW GROWING UP. THE TRIP STARTED TO HEAL WHO I WAS.”

she came across reports on the benefits of tea in the healing process. When Tse returned home to Fairbanks to work as an athletic trainer, her patients and colleagues became fascinated with her flourishing knowledge of tea and encouraged her to pursue this new interest.

CULTURAL IMMERSION

As Tse’s interest in tea developed, she decided to travel to the town in Hong Kong where her father was born to visit tea farms. “When I flew to the very

first tea farm, I realized that landscape was what my father saw growing up,” she says. “The trip started to heal who I was and make me more comfortable in my cultural identity as an American, and I realized that it’s OK that I’m different and unique.”

After her return, Tse began teaching online tea classes and tea courses at the local university. “People started telling me about their experiences with tea, and I could see how this common medium was allowing people to reflect





“TSE STARTED SIPPING STREAMS AS AN EDUCATIONAL CLASS OVER FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, BUT SHE QUICKLY REALIZED ITS POTENTIAL TO FOSTER CONNECTIVITY IN HER COMMUNITY.”



on and heal their relationships. That essentially became the theme of my business.”

A COMMUNITY FOCUS

Tse started Sipping Streams as an educational class over fifteen years ago, but she quickly realized its potential to foster connectivity in her community. The town of Fairbanks was, and still is, a very tight-knit community, Tse says, and growing up in this environment, especially around other people who worked in the restaurant industry, gave her the confidence to open her own business and inspired its purpose as a gathering place.

Sipping Streams has become a safe space for all kinds of people to visit,

enjoy a cup of tea, and get to know one another. “Our town and culture are all about supporting each other,” she says. At the Sipping Streams tea house, guests can select from a variety of tea experiences, including Victorian Tea, a classic afternoon-tea experience with sandwiches, pastries, and scones; Simplicity Tea; and Children’s Tea. Visitors looking for something less structured can choose a cup or pot of over forty different varieties of tea, as well as other tea-based beverages like bubble tea, tea smoothies, and tea floats.

Fostering community is the mission, but tea is the medium. As a certified tea expert, Tse has worked hard to create exceptional tea blends that have

been recognized as some of the best in the world. Her teas have won first-, second-, and third-place awards at the Global Tea Championship (formerly known as the North American Tea Championship). “My first award-winning tea was one that my mom and I made,” Tse shares. “A student gave me a book on local botanicals, and I told my mom we should try to make an Alaskan tea. People responded really well to it, so we decided to enter it into the North American Tea Championship and won. It was so amazing to win with Alaskan ingredients that we picked ourselves.”

TEA FOR THE FUTURE

When the pandemic began, Tse decided to send all her virtual tea class

students a tea plant to nurture that could be used in their lessons. At the end of the course, her students started asking about creating a tea farm. “I said, ‘I already have this tea program, we package tea, and we do wholesale.’ I thought there would be no way,” Tse says. But Tse’s husband encouraged her to reach out to Bernie Karl, a friend of theirs who owns the nearby Chena Hot Springs Resort, about using one of the resort’s greenhouses. Tse and her former high-school students had already volunteered at the greenhouses years earlier, so she was familiar with the growing process and logistics.

Over the past two years, with some trial and error and a few roadblocks along the way, Tse has managed to sustain this endeavor, making it Alaska’s first tea farm and the first to be run on geothermal heat. Although tea plants are not native to Alaska, nor do they typically grow well in that type of climate, the ground temperature at Chena Hot Springs has allowed the plants to thrive.

As much as it’s a feat for Tse, she says it’s also one for science and the future of tea production. “We have extreme changes in daylight, and this forces

the tea to grow differently and gives it a high density of nutrients,” she says. “My friend, the former chairman of the Tocklai Tea Research Institute of India, told me I was going to make history—not because I’m in Alaska and it’s cold but because of the sunlight.”

AN EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION

Tse founded her business wanting to educate people about the power of tea, and she has continued that vision in a variety of ways. In addition to teaching courses, Tse has published a book about her tea journey called *The Essence of Tea*, hosts free tea workshops on the company’s YouTube channel, and even started *The Essence of Tea* podcast.

“The end goal of my business is always to transform people’s lives and help them grow in their personal development so that they can be a positive force,” Tse says. “I want people to look at Sipping Streams for encouragement in what they can do, not just for themselves, but for their community and the people that they love.”

For more info, visit sippingstreams.com and subscribe to [Sipping Streams Tea Company](#) on YouTube.

FROM SOUP TO NUTS

written by **estella schweizer** | photography by **winfried heinze**



RECIPES TAKEN FROM *LET'S GO NUTS* BY ESTELLA SCHWEIZER (PRESTEL, APRIL 2022). PHOTOGRAPHY BY WINFRIED HEINZE.



Serves 4

velvety beet and celery soup

- 1¼ pounds beets
- 2 celery stalks with leaves
- 2 small potatoes
- 1 onion
- 1 garlic clove
- Olive oil
- 4 cloves
- 1⅔ cups apple juice
- 2 cups vegetable broth
- 1 piece horseradish, roughly ¾ inch
- 1 apple
- 4–6 tablespoons sunflower seeds
- Salt
- 2 tablespoons light tahini (or a pale nut butter)
- 1–2 tablespoons vinegar (or soy sauce)

1. Cut off the root ends of the beets. If the skin is unblemished, it can be left on; otherwise, peel the beets. Pluck off a couple of leaves from the celery and set aside to use as decoration. Peel the potatoes, onion, and garlic. Finely chop the onion and garlic. Cut the beets, potatoes, and celery into large pieces.
2. Heat some olive oil in a large saucepan. Fry the onion, garlic, and cloves until fragrant and slightly browned. Add the beets, potatoes, and celery and sauté briskly over high heat, stirring constantly. Deglaze the pan with the apple juice, scraping any delicious bits from the bottom of the pan, and pour in the vegetable broth. Reduce the heat to low, cover the pan, and simmer for 20 minutes until the vegetables are tender.
3. Meanwhile, peel and finely grate the horseradish. Cut the apple into quarters and remove the core, then slice each quarter into thin matchsticks. Toast the sunflower seeds in a small dry pan over moderate heat then set aside.
4. Blend the cooked vegetables until completely smooth. Add some salt and the tahini then process again. If the soup is too thick, stir in some hot water. Season with salt, vinegar, and possibly some more tahini.
5. Divide the soup between four deep bowls and garnish with the grated horseradish, apple matchsticks, sunflower seeds, and celery leaves. Serve immediately.



Serves 4

roasted brussels sprouts with macadamias

4 tablespoons coconut oil

1¾ pounds Brussels sprouts

1 pomegranate

1 bunch arugula leaves

½ cup tahini

4 tablespoons lemon juice

Salt

1 teaspoon fennel seeds

1 teaspoon aniseeds

½ teaspoon each ground cumin, ground turmeric, and curry powder

2 teaspoons coconut sugar, plus more if desired

Freshly ground pepper

3 ounces roasted macadamia nuts

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Heat 3 tablespoons of coconut oil in a small saucepan until melted. Clean the Brussels sprouts, slice in half, and spread on the lined baking sheet. Pour the melted coconut oil over the Brussels sprouts, toss to coat all over, and bake for 20–25 minutes until slightly browned.

2. Meanwhile, cut the pomegranate in half and scoop out the seeds. Roughly chop the arugula leaves. In a small bowl, combine the tahini with 3 tablespoons of the lemon juice and ¾ cup of water to make a creamy sauce. Season lightly with salt.

3. Heat the remaining coconut oil in a large pan. Sauté the fennel seeds and aniseeds over moderate heat until fragrant. Add the cumin, turmeric, curry powder, and coconut sugar, followed by the roasted Brussels sprouts, and toss to coat. Season with salt, pepper, the remaining lemon juice, and possibly more coconut sugar. Fold in the macadamia nuts.

4. Transfer the Brussels sprouts and macadamia mixture to a serving bowl. Sprinkle with the pomegranate seeds and arugula, drizzle liberally with the tahini and lemon sauce, and serve.



Serves 4

sweet carrot halva

14 ounces carrots
1 pinch salt
4 tablespoons maple syrup
3 tablespoons light tahini + more to serve
½ teaspoon ground cardamom
1 pinch bourbon vanilla powder
¼ cup white cane sugar
⅓ cup sesame seeds

1. Bring a small amount of water to a gentle boil in a medium saucepan. Finely slice the carrots and cook in the gently simmering water for 20 minutes until very soft.

2. Drain the carrots in a sieve and purée with the salt until creamy. Mix in the maple syrup and tahini and flavor with the cardamom and vanilla powder. Divide the halva between bowls and set aside.

3. To prepare for making the sesame brittle, line a large plate with parchment paper. Cook the white cane sugar in a small nonstick pan over moderate to high heat. As soon as the sugar begins to melt (at first it will melt slowly, but this soon speeds up), let it caramelize, while stirring constantly with a wooden spoon. Remember, both the pan and the liquid caramel are too hot to use a rubber spatula or to allow tasting. Quickly stir in the sesame seeds and as soon as they begin to color, pour the mixture onto the lined plate and spread out thinly. After about 10 minutes, the brittle will be firm and can be broken into pieces.

4. Crumble the sesame brittle over the halva and serve each portion with a blob of tahini.

Tip: Halva also tastes great chilled and can easily be prepared a few hours or even days in advance. It will keep covered in the refrigerator for about 4 days.



Makes 1 medium jar

no!tella

1 ounce cocoa butter
3½ ounces dates, pitted and soaked in water overnight
¾ cup hazelnut butter
¼ cup cocoa powder
1 pinch salt
⅓ cup plus 2 tablespoons plant-based milk
Optional: 1 pinch bourbon vanilla powder or other ground spices of your choice

1. Heat the cocoa butter in a small saucepan until melted.

2. Purée the dates with ⅓ to ⅔ cup of the soaking water until you have a thick paste. Add the hazelnut butter, cocoa powder, and salt then process until smooth and creamy. Finally, add the melted cocoa butter and plant-based milk and process again.

3. If you like, add vanilla powder or other spices to the creamy paste. Transfer to a storage jar with a lid and store in a cool place.

Tip: A pretty jar of this hazelnut and chocolate spread makes a lovely gift, and it is delicious eaten with a sweet yeast loaf or some banana bread. It will keep for at least 4–5 days if refrigerated in an airtight container—if you can resist eating it for that long.

written by **matthew brady** | photography by **getty images**

WHEN YOU VISIT A DARK-SKY PLACE,
YOU GAIN AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT
PERSPECTIVE OF AND APPRECIATION
FOR THE STARS.

spectacular stargazing sites

Vincent van Gogh once said, “The sight of the stars always makes me dream.” Like van Gogh, I’ve always loved looking at the stars. To this day, if I am outside in my yard on a clear night, I’ll make sure to spend a few minutes gazing upward. As it turns out, though, by living in metropolitan suburbs my entire life, I haven’t really been looking at the stars—as much as I could be, anyway.

Joshua Tree National Park

Bettymaya Foott, the director of engagement for the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), has had the opposite experience. Growing up in rural Utah, she spent countless nights lying on her trampoline and looking up at a sky filled with stars as far as her eyes could see, as well as heavenly bodies like the Milky Way. The difference? She grew up and still lives in a dark-sky area of the country.

If you're willing to travel, there are dozens of such places throughout America to truly witness the awe-inspiring night sky. Designated by the IDA, there are a total of 195 certified dark-sky sites across the globe. And the experience is like ... well, night and day. You can see around five hundred stars from dusk until dawn in an urban area affected by light pollution, but in an official dark-sky area, the number of visible stars can expand to 15,000—making these places must-see destinations for young and old alike.

BEFORE YOU GO

So how should you begin your stargazing adventure? The best first step is to visit the IDA website, which features a map of International Dark-Sky places across the country. “Look up events hosted at dark-sky parks near you, or just go on your own self-guided tour of the night sky,” Foott suggests. “I would also recommend using one of the many free planetarium apps that tell you what constellation, star, or planet you're looking at when you point your phone to the night sky. It's really fun.”

WHERE TO GO DARK

Most dark-sky areas are clustered in the western third of the country, but you can find them from coast to coast. Not surprisingly, the majority are in a national or state park. Here are just some of the notable star-filled sites where seeing is believing.

“IN AN OFFICIAL DARK-SKY AREA, THE NUMBER OF VISIBLE STARS CAN EXPAND TO 15,000—MAKING THESE PLACES MUST-SEE DESTINATIONS FOR YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE.”



Glacier National Park

CHERRY SPRINGS STATE PARK (PENNSYLVANIA)

The only dark-sky area in the Northeast part of the country outside of Maine, Cherry Springs' stargazing field can be found atop a 2,300-foot mountain in the northern part of the state.

BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL RESERVE (FLORIDA)

The southernmost dark-sky area in the country, Big Cypress holds free educational events for the public, including a ranger-led astronomy program and constellation tours.



Glacier National Park



The Colorado Plateau

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK
(TEXAS)

Big Bend holds the distinction of having the least light pollution of any national park unit in the continental United States, so you'll find some of the darkest night skies here.

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK
(MONTANA)

Glacier National Park is unique in that it has a dark-sky sister park, Waterton Lakes National Park, about an hour across the Canadian border, allowing you to double up on your dark-sky experience.

THE COLORADO PLATEAU

Foott highly recommends this area for a scenic stargazing adventure. "Here you have a juxtaposition of the incredible night sky and the beautiful rolling canyons, arches, red rocks, and rivers. It's the coolest combination in the world," Foott says. "It's also one of the darkest places in the continental US and one of the best places to recreate. It's very well-known globally as a dark-sky place."

To Foott's point, the Colorado Plateau, a 240,000-square-mile expanse that includes parts of Colorado, Utah,

Arizona, and New Mexico, offers a plethora of dark-sky locales with breathtaking settings. Some notable places to consider include Chaco Culture National Historical Park in New Mexico; Colorado's Mesa Verde National Park, the world's one-hundredth dark-sky park; Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona; and Utah's Natural Bridges National Monument, the first-ever dark-sky park named by the IDA. ("It's super dark and super beautiful," Foott adds.)

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK
(CALIFORNIA)

Located in the Southern California desert, Joshua Tree is an excellent place for stargazing in part because the park is located 5,000 feet above sea level. It's recommended that you travel to the east end to see the stars because it's 300 miles from the nearest city, making the area ultradark.

The night sky is a constant source of awe and inspiration, but you may need to travel some distance to experience it in all its glory. By stargazing at a dark-sky location, you'll give yourself access to not only the infinite vastness of the cosmos but also the endless wonder that accompanies it.

For more info, visit darksky.org



interview with **sara hillery** | written by **shelley goldstein** | photography by **michael hunter**

Houston, We Have a Rebuild

DESIGNER SARA HILLERY TRANSFORMED A HOUSTON HOME INTO A SPACIOUS AND AIRY ABODE FOR A CREATIVE COUPLE AND THEIR THREE CHILDREN.

What did this home look like when your clients bought it?

The house had a similar basic footprint, including the atrium. When the clients sent photos of the house to me, I thought it looked amazing, but, unfortunately, it wasn't in good shape structurally. The couple began with the idea of preserving what was already there and adding on, but we ended up having to take the house down to the studs and reconstruct it.

What did the rebuild entail?

It ended up being a blessing in disguise. These are creative clients who can imagine the potential in a space. We decided to add 1,000 feet to the house's footprint (including the living room and breakfast areas) and raise the ceilings to make it feel lighter and more spacious. The rebuild also allowed the clients and us to work together closely to ensure that every element—from the wall decor to the built-in walnut storage components throughout the house—contributed to the feeling of intentionality and playfulness.

Was it inspired by any particular architect or era?

The original home reflected midcentury design, and we tried to honor that spirit. The clients and I spent a lot of time searching for images of midcentury homes built during that era; they were also active on Pinterest, collecting ideas they liked and wanted to incorporate.

What part of the rebuild had the maximum "wow" factor?

For me, it's the bump-out we created for the breakfast room. The glass on two sides of the room, the light and raised ceiling, and the views of trees make the space feel open yet private.



THE CUSTOM-MADE POUFS AND BLUE-VELVET SOFA DEMONSTRATE HOW DESIGN FOR A FAMILY CAN BE PLAYFUL, FUNCTIONAL, AND CHIC ALL AT THE SAME TIME."



How did you make sure the breakfast room and living room spaces would segue easily into each other?

The living room, breakfast room, kitchen, and playroom are all essentially one open space, but they're clearly delineated through distinct yet complementary colors. We chose furnishings and accents that we could move and interchange from room to room.

How did you incorporate color into the rest of the house?

We wanted the house to feel chic yet approachable for a young family. To get guidance on the color palette, I asked one of the clients what her favorite colors were and incorporated blues, pinks, purples, and greens in various shades. Some of the spaces, especially those that the children would be spending much of their time in, have more color, while others, such as the couple's bedroom, are more calming and neutral.

The art in the living room matches the hexagon coffee tables so perfectly. Which came first? What vibe did you want for that room?

The art, which was found at High Point Market in North Carolina, came first. This is the adults' living room, but we knew it needed to be kid friendly as well as pet friendly for the family dog. I added more color by re-covering the sofa from the couple's last house with a sturdy, blue, indoor-outdoor fabric and bringing in the hexagonal tables, which can be moved around and taken apart as necessary. Everyone loves that space for watching movies! The room is a continuation of the house's flexible and comfy yet classy vibe.





Will you talk about the dining room table and what makes it special?

The eye-catching dining room table has a touch of family history. It was originally a root table that belonged to one of the clients' parents and was used as a coffee table. I added a custom brass-nickel base and a glass top to make it functional without feeling overly formal.

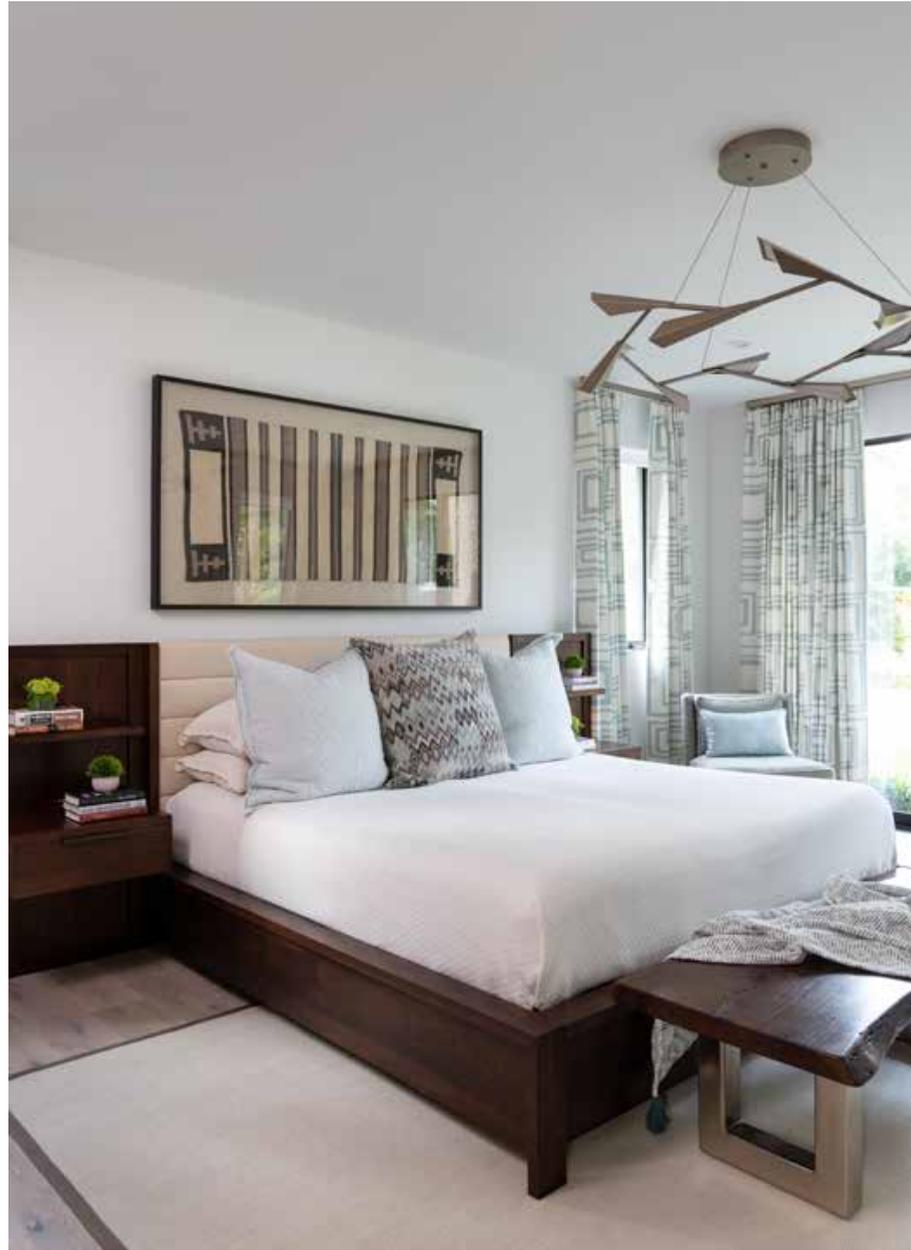
What design element did you start with in the kitchen? Is it easier or more difficult to design when the floor plan is so open?

We began with the island since we knew we wanted it to serve lots of purposes. We designed it so that it had storage space, a place to eat, and cooking surfaces, and we created one part at kids' height so that they could help prep and make things. There's also a hidden charging station and even a tucked-away vacuum.

It's more difficult when the floor plan is so open because you have to consider everything in unison. We love playing with textures and materials, so it's a fun challenge carving out spaces within a more open floor plan. Constructing half walls, choosing a distinctive backsplash, and creating rooms within rooms through design aesthetics make each space feel separate, yet the family still feels connected.

Do the clients have a favorite room?

The children's playroom is playful and whimsical and colorful, and there are a lot of custom-made and personalized elements. We painted tortoise shells and installed Hayley Sheldon woven art, and this helps bring color and vibrancy to the bright, white room. The custom-made poufs and blue-velvet sofa demonstrate how design for a family can be playful, functional, and chic all at the same time.



How is designing kids' rooms different from navigating the design style of an adult?

Young kids need ample space to play, a fact we kept in mind when designing their rooms. When we design for a child, we know that we want them to love the room they are in but that they will also be growing and changing; the room should give them space to do that (literally and figuratively). Adults don't tend to change the way they use a space over time.

What did you envision for the couple's bedroom?

We wanted to create a serene space that relies on clean lines and emphasizes functionality for this busy couple with active personal and professional lives. They also love nature, so we tried to incorporate elements that would evoke this: limestone, walnut-wood detailing around the tub in the adjoining bathroom, and a custom-made wood-paneled sliding door.

What were your goals for the outdoor area?

The goal was to create a welcoming, usable space for the whole family. The atrium is perfect for family hangouts and entertaining friends, while the backyard was designed especially with three active kids in mind. It has a treehouse, a sports court, and even a putt-putt area.

How do you feel about design rules?

I don't believe that design has to be "just so," and I also believe in pushing boundaries a bit. The clients originally wanted the house to be gray and beige, but I encouraged them to add color. One compelling reason was that I knew this would be a house with young kids and all their toys. Color makes it easier for all those toys to blend in instead of stick out.

What did you find most challenging about this project?

The most challenging aspect was probably the cabinetry details. We wanted the walnut cabinetry to feel seamless—more like artwork than a design feature—so this had to be very intentional. In addition, the house's open floor plan means that there aren't many walls, but this couple loves art. So it was a challenge to incorporate art into those that were available.

What do you feel worked perfectly in this rebuild?

Creating distinctive spaces within the larger open areas of the house was my favorite part. There are always nooks and crannies to consider, and I'm proud of how we were able to make everything work together in perfect unison.

For more info, visit sarahillery.com





interview with **sean kenney** | written by **matthew brady** | photography by **sean kenney**

BLOCK PARTY

THAT'S WHAT LIFE IS FOR ARTIST SEAN KENNEY, WHOSE COLORFUL LEGO SCULPTURES ARE DISPLAYED AROUND THE WORLD.



Have you always enjoyed LEGO bricks?

I've been using LEGO bricks my whole life. They were usually the only toys I'd request for my birthday. My models became more elaborate as I got older, and I eventually started building them professionally. Now it's my full-time career.

What did you do for a living before this? When did you decide to switch careers?

I used to work as a cartoonist, graphic artist, and website designer, and I wore a suit every day. But the whole time, my inner child was itching to get out. Every night after work, I would go home and play with my LEGO toys—sometimes while I was still in my suit!

One day, I was sitting in my office overlooking Park Avenue in New York. I wasn't working; I was daydreaming about what I would build with LEGO bricks when I got home. At that moment, I realized that I needed to follow my dreams. So I stood up, took off my tie, and walked out—just like that, in the middle of the day. And I've never looked back.

What's your process for creating your sculptures?

Every project starts with lots of old-fashioned LEGO building at my desk. I gather as many photographs and drawings of the subject as I can and

“MY STUDIO [IN AMSTERDAM] IS A BIG, OPEN AREA WITH LOTS OF SKYLIGHTS, HIGH CEILINGS, AND LARGE GLASS DOORS FOR LOADING AND UNLOADING.”

use graph paper or a computer model to plan out the basic shape and size. There’s a lot of visualization required, and I often must step back and examine the model from all sides as I’m designing it. I’ll change sections over and over, sometimes making multiple prototypes.

Some of my sculptures are very large and require the help of multiple builders over many months, in which case I use digital design programs and then create schematics for my assistants to follow, much like an architect creating blueprints for construction workers.

How do you protect your projects?

All my sculptures are steel-reinforced, fully glued, and then coated with a special UV-protectant lacquer to protect the plastic from the sun. They’re also bolted to the ground to protect against weather and vandalism.

What LEGO shapes do you use?

What’s most challenging about this type of art?

LEGO bricks can be used to create vastly different things, which is always fascinating. When building

giant sculptures, I mostly use basic rectangular pieces in very large quantities. Conversely, designing mosaics is like drawing pixel art. And creating architectural scale models is like playtime from childhood; at times, it feels like a completely different medium.

The biggest challenge is to create round, curved shapes with rectangles. But the most complex undertaking is to create people’s faces. Moving just one piece can immediately change a facial expression, so I often need to rebuild a face many times to get the subtlety of the subject just right. I must think ahead as I’m building upward linearly, which is tricky at first; I was once commissioned to build sculptural portraits of two brothers, and it took an entire summer.

Do you have your own workshop?

How many pieces do you own?

How do you obtain them?

I operate out of a commercial space in the historic city center of Amsterdam. My studio is a big, open area with lots of skylights, high ceilings, and large glass doors for loading and unloading. I keep about a million LEGO pieces in





my studio and another twenty million in a warehouse nearby and go through about 250,000 to 400,000 LEGO pieces every year. I purchase them just like everyone else does—the LEGO Group does not sponsor or endorse me or my work. I was the first person LEGO offered to sell to in bulk, but they don't do that anymore.

There's so much attention to detail in your works. What does this mean to you?

I want my creations to have a spark of life, whether it's hair that looks like it's blowing in the wind, a creature in flight that looks weightless, or a city full of buildings that feel like tiny people actually live inside them. If I didn't fuss over the details, my work would feel lifeless and hollow. I want people to be able to connect with it and really believe the illusion.

How many hours do you put into a typical sculpture?

Depending on the size of the sculpture, it can take anywhere from a few weeks to several months. For example, a six-foot sculpture of a plant or animal would easily take a month to design and two more months to physically construct. My largest and most time-consuming piece was *Growing Ideas*, which took over two years to create. There's a documentary about it on my website.

What does your family think about all this?

My wife has been very supportive

from the beginning. It was difficult (and scary) to decide whether I should pursue this, and she gave me the courage to follow my heart instead of just plodding along doing whatever society told me I was supposed to do.

Of course, my children think I have the coolest job in the world. They are still very young, but I invite them into my studio every now and then to help with something simple. I love being able to involve them in my work. Recently, my daughter helped me brainstorm ideas, and I'm proud to say that I'm now building a giant sculpture that was all her idea!

What are your other favorite sculptures?

One of my favorites is called *Back from the Market with Mom*. It's a cartoon sculpture of my family having a great time as they carry groceries using a cargo bike. I am a big proponent of alternative transportation, and when I lived in Brooklyn, I used a three-wheeled cargo bike as my primary means of running errands and taking my children from place to place. In creating this sculpture, I wanted to capture the simple joys of everyday life as a parent while solidifying the image of a cyclist having fun.

In 2017, I created a permanent hanging installation for Target called *The Building Blocks of NYC*. It's comprised of 105 individual New York City-themed sculptures built entirely with red and white LEGO pieces

IF I DIDN'T FUSS OVER THE DETAILS, MY WORK WOULD FEEL LIFELESS AND HOLLOW. I WANT PEOPLE TO BE ABLE TO CONNECT WITH IT AND REALLY BELIEVE THE ILLUSION."



and staggered across the main wall of Target's first Midtown Manhattan store. Each sculpture is held magically in place by hidden clear panels and thin cables. When viewed from the proper angle, the imagery lines up to form the letters "NYC," symbolizing

the idea that the city itself is built upon the myriad individual components that make it come to life. In making this piece, I wanted to address my fellow New Yorkers, so, rather than creating clichéd models of taxis and famous skyscrapers, I included things they'd recognize from their daily lives, including folding chairs from Bryant Park, Alternate Side Parking signs, a Citi Bike, a brownstone, and an Anthora coffee cup.

I'm also particularly fond of my life-sized sculpture *Mother Polar Bear and Cubs*. When watching polar bears with their cubs, I was taken by how almost human they seemed and saw myself and my kids in it. I hope that by humanizing polar bears, my viewers will relate to them and care about them a bit more and, in the process, perhaps help protect their habitats—and ours.

Where has this adventure taken you? What are your overall thoughts about your journey?

My nature-themed exhibits *Nature Connects* and *Nature POP!* have been traveling the globe since 2012, visiting nearly one hundred botanical gardens, arboretums, zoos, and science centers across the United States, Europe, and Asia. More broadly, my work has been in over twenty countries.

I enjoy meeting and befriending people from around the world and immersing myself in their cultures and cities. And, of course, I've been able to work with many people at the LEGO Group over the years, including the toy designers and even the CEO and owners. I've met so many other talented artists, which is super inspiring, as well as celebrities and even a president! Who knew that my art would take me so far?

For more info, visit seankenney.com



TAPE MAGIC

written and photographed by **shelley goldstein**

CHILLY WINTER EVENINGS ARE THE PERFECT TIME TO TAP INTO YOUR INNER ARTIST. PACKING TAPE TRANSFERS OPEN UP A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES, FROM MIXED-MEDIA COLLAGES TO POSTCARDS TO FOOD STORAGE LABELS.

SUPPLIES:

- Magazines that can be cut up
- Scissors
- High-quality clear packing tape
- A burnishing tool (e.g. a bone folder, burnishing bone, credit card, or spoon)
- A shallow bowl
- UHU glue stick

1 CHOOSE YOUR IMAGE: Magazines are a great place to find an illustration or typography to use for your transfer. You can also create your own design and photocopy it. (Keep in mind that an inkjet printer will not work for this.)



2 TAPE TIME: Make sure your image is faceup. Begin covering the image with packing tape. Lay strips of tape across the image horizontally or vertically, making sure to overlap the strips a bit. Lay the tape carefully so you don't get air bubbles.

3 BURNISH, BABY, BURNISH: Now that you have your taped image, you need to burnish the surface using your burnishing tool. Go over each section of tape well, buffing the tape onto the image.



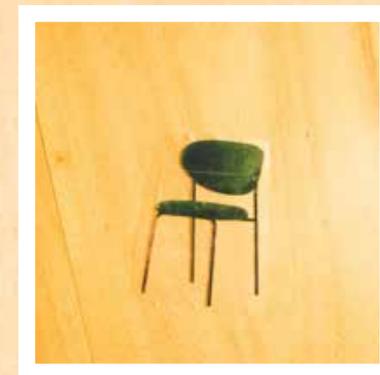
4 TAKE A DIP: Fill the bowl with warm water, and submerge your taped image for a few minutes.



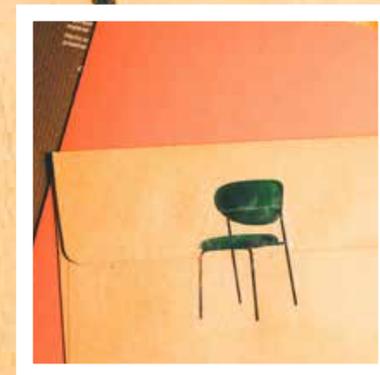
5 PEEL: You should be able to easily rub or peel off the soaked paper backing. Be sure to discard paper bits in the trash and not in the sink.



6 THE BIG REVEAL: After you peel off the backing, your image should have transferred onto the clear tape, leaving you with a homemade sticker to use however you want. If it loses its adhesiveness, try a few swipes of a UHU-brand glue stick.



7 USE IT: Want to step up your correspondence game? Try using your image transfer as an envelope seal.



PUT YOUR BEST HOUSE FORWARD

MOST HOMEBUYERS START THEIR SEARCH FOR A HOME ONLINE, SO BEAUTIFUL PHOTOS ARE KEY TO MAKING SURE YOUR LISTING GETS NOTICED. FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO MAKE YOUR HOME PICTURE-PERFECT ON-SCREEN AND READY TO SELL.

written by **lauren kim** | photography by **getty images, unless noted**



DECLUTTER

Remember that less is more when prepping your home for photos. You want your home to look clean and spacious. Try to reduce the number of furnishings you have in your home since cluttered rooms tend to look smaller. For instance, you can show off a spacious bedroom by only leaving the bed, a dresser, and a nightstand or two in the room and highlighting a modern vanity by making the countertop gleam and putting away personal items. If your home is filled with a lot of furniture and decor, consider renting a storage space to store your extra items.



DEPERSONALIZE

Think “model home” when preparing your home for photos. You don’t want it to look lived in; you want it to look like a place buyers could live in. Put away photos and anything else personal—just be careful not to fill up

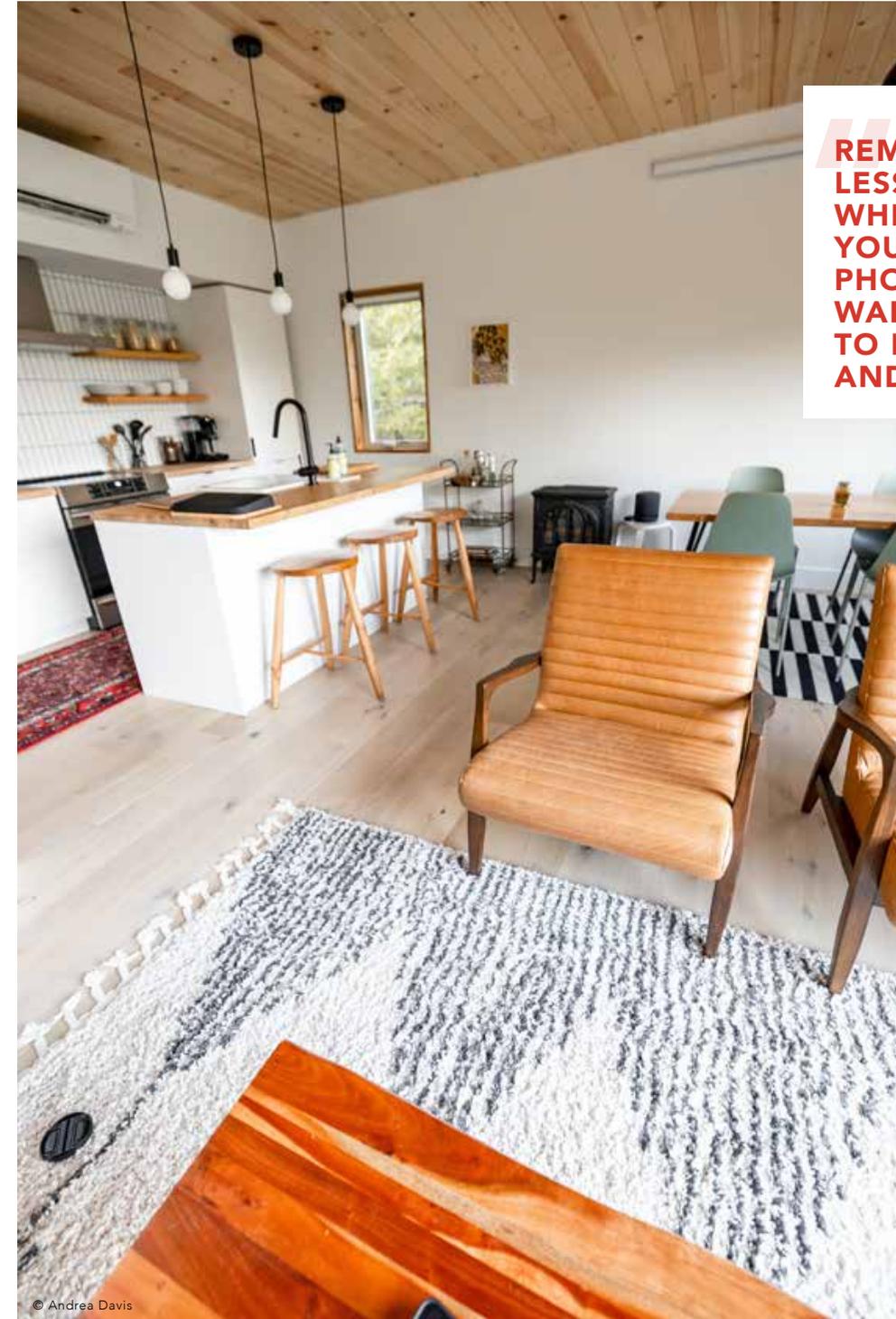
your closets, as you want to keep those tidy for home showings. If there is a collection of souvenirs on your dresser, for instance, replace it with something universally appealing, such as a potted plant or an arrangement of flowers.

ADD INTEREST

While some spaces might need decluttering to look their best, others may need additional items to be photo ready. For instance, if your living room is empty except for your sofa and coffee table, you might want to bring in some decor, such as a neat stack of hardcover books for the coffee table. You could also consider hanging peel-and-stick wallpaper behind the sofa to create an eye-catching feature wall.

GO NEUTRAL

Adding a fresh coat of paint is an easy way to make your home look fresher. When choosing paint for your walls,



“REMEMBER THAT LESS IS MORE WHEN PREPPING YOUR HOME FOR PHOTOS. YOU WANT YOUR HOME TO LOOK CLEAN AND SPACIOUS.”

© Andrea Davis

“INCLUDE AS MUCH NATURAL LIGHT IN YOUR HOME AS POSSIBLE BY OPENING BLINDS AND CURTAINS.”

opt for neutral colors, such as whites, grays, and beiges, that coordinate with your floors and any furniture you’re keeping as you stage your home. Use bright colors minimally, using only one to two in a room to avoid making it look busy or chaotic. If a space has a large, vibrant piece of furniture, such as a big red sofa, make it the main splash of color and remove other brightly hued objects that could clash with it.

TIDY UP

Vacuum or sweep your floors, and wipe off light fixtures and other surfaces. Also be sure to make windows and other reflective surfaces shine. And don’t forget to make your outdoor space look its best. Before outdoor photos are taken, consider pressure-washing your home’s exterior, sweeping your patio, pulling any weeds, and trimming your bushes and trees.

LET IN THE LIGHT

Include as much natural light in your home as possible by opening blinds and curtains. It’s also a good idea to observe the spaces in your home to determine when they get the best light. Turn off lamps and light fixtures, but not if the lighting is a feature that could help sell your home, such as recessed ceiling lights. Sunrise and sunset are optimal times for exterior photos; however, midday will create more shadows.



© Dmitry Zvoloskiy



CURATE YOUR SHOTS

Eliminate anything that will mar your photos. For example, make sure the toilet seat is down in the bathroom and replace mismatched towels with neatly folded ones in a neutral color. In the living room, turn your television off, hide extension cords and remotes, and limit the number of pillows and other decorative elements. Clear kitchen counters of extra appliances, and add a simple bowl of lemons or other fruit.

RELY ON A PROFESSIONAL

As tempting as it may be to take your own photos, you will get much better shots with a professional photographer, who will have the experience and equipment that will help make your home look its best. Ask your real estate agent about vetting a photographer, or hire one yourself.



STAGE VIRTUALLY

Another option is to have your home staged virtually by a design company or through a virtual-staging app. When Nathalie Armand-Bradley of Mod Punch Designs, an interior design firm in Macon, Georgia, virtually stages a home, she digitally removes or adds furniture and decor. “Virtually staging a space allows a buyer to get an idea of how the space could work,” she explains. If you virtually stage your photos, be sure to disclose in your MLS listing that they have been edited; you might also want to post the before shots with your after photos. And don’t mislead buyers by using virtual staging to change or fix the physical characteristics of your home.



“WHEN NATHALIE ARMAND-BRADLEY OF MOD PUNCH DESIGNS, AN INTERIOR DESIGN FIRM IN MACON, GEORGIA, VIRTUALLY STAGES A HOME, SHE DIGITALLY REMOVES OR ADDS FURNITURE AND DECOR.”

front of card:

NOITELLA

1 oz. cocoa butter

3½ oz. dates, pitted and soaked in water overnight

¾ c. hazelnut butter

¼ c. cocoa powder

1 pinch salt

½ c. plus 2 tbsp. plant-based milk

Optional: 1 pinch bourbon vanilla powder or other ground spices of your choice





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back of card:

1. Heat the cocoa butter in a small saucepan until melted.
2. Purée the dates with ¼ to ½ cup of the soaking water until you have a thick paste. Add the hazelnut butter, cocoa powder, and salt then process until smooth and creamy. Finally, add the melted cocoa butter and plant-based milk and process again.
3. If you like, add vanilla powder or other spices to the creamy paste. Transfer to a storage jar with a lid and store in a cool place.

TIP: A pretty jar of this hazelnut and chocolate spread makes a lovely gift, and it is delicious eaten with a sweet yeast loaf or some banana bread. It will keep for at least 4–5 days if refrigerated in an airtight container—if you can resist eating it for that long.

Recipes taken from Let's Go Nuts by Estella Schweizer (Penne), April 2022. Photography by Winfried Heinze



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–LEE ANN M., Bridgewater, NJ



LIME CHICKEN with cherry tomatoes and potatoes

4 medium, peeled, waxy potatoes, very thinly sliced
Flaky sea salt
Coarsely ground pepper
4 whole chicken legs
Olive oil
16 small cherry tomatoes, cut in half
2 limes, each cut into 8 wedges
1/2 c. dry white wine



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