

Compliments of Stacey Shanner

*Good to Be*

issue 18

HOME

*HAPPY  
NEW YEAR!*



Stacey Shanner  
Direct: (866) 458-4226



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





## Front of Tear Out Card 1

### CARAMELIZED FENNEL *and White Bean Salad*

4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided  
2 medium fennel bulbs, trimmed, quartered, and thinly sliced (reserve ½ c. of the feathery fronds)  
2 tsp. fresh thyme leaves  
Kosher salt  
Freshly ground black pepper  
3 tbsp. red wine vinegar  
1 tbsp. Dijon mustard  
1 clove garlic, grated or minced  
2 (15-oz.) cans white beans, such as cannellini, drained and rinsed  
½ c. dry white wine  
½ small lemon, for serving



**Stacey Shanner**

**Direct:** (866) 458-4226  
**E-mail:** [info@remindermedia.com](mailto:info@remindermedia.com)  
**www.remindermedia.com**

**The Shanner Group**  
1100 First Avenue  
Suite 200  
King Of Prussia, PA 19406




## Back of Tear Out Card 1

### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Heat 2 tbsp. olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add the fennel and thyme, season with ½ tsp. salt and several grinds of pepper, and cook, stirring occasionally and reducing the heat if the fennel starts to burn, until soft and caramelized, about 25 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, whisk together the remaining 2 tbsp. olive oil, the vinegar, Dijon, garlic, a generous pinch of salt, and several grinds of pepper in a large bowl. Add the white beans and toss to coat.
3. Once the fennel is caramelized, pour in the wine. Scrape up any browned bits on the bottom of the pan and continue to stir until the wine has evaporated, about 1 minute. Transfer the fennel to the bowl of beans and toss to combine.
4. Coarsely chop the reserved fronds, add them to the bowl, and toss to combine. Taste and season with additional salt and pepper as needed. Serve warm or at room temperature, squeezing the lemon over the salad just before serving.

Reprinted with permission from *Salad Seasons: Vegetable-Forward Dishes All Year* by Sheela Prakash © Rizzoli, 2023. Photography © Kristin Teig.



**SERVES 4**



Dear Bill and Judy,

If you have big plans for your home this year, you might be thinking, “Where do I start?” This issue of Good to Be Home is here to help with solutions for getting your home back to a pristine postholiday state, design tips from one of home renovation TV’s most popular couples, and a guide to building a financial nest egg through real estate.

The busyness of the holidays can quickly change your home from a place of peace and relaxation to one of chaos and disorder, especially if you play host to guests this season. The enclosed tips for ridding your spaces of clutter can help you get your home back in good shape in no time.

Most couples who appear on home renovation shows have quit their day jobs to embark on the house-flipping or redesigning journey, but not Brooke and Brice Gilliam. The husband-and-wife duo share how they balance filming their show, *Making Modern*, with their full-time jobs and explain how homeowners can curate the home of their dreams just like they did.

Buying a new home is one of the most impactful purchases you can make during your life for a variety of reasons. Learn how investing in real estate has the potential to help you improve your finances over time.

What goals will you set for your home in the new year? As always, it’s a pleasure to send you this magazine.

**Stacey Shanner**



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**Direct:** (866) 458-4226

**E-mail:** [info@remindermedia.com](mailto:info@remindermedia.com)

**[www.remindermedia.com](http://www.remindermedia.com)**

**The Shanner Group**

1100 First Avenue

Suite 200

King of Prussia, PA 19406





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  
Director of Content Jessica Fitzpatrick  
marketing@remindermedia.com

EDITORIAL

Editorial Manager Alexa Bricker  
Senior Layout Designer Jordan Hunsberger  
Senior Editor Matthew Brady  
Junior Editor Dakota Damschroder  
Senior Content Writer Shelley Goldstein  
Content Writers Bonnie Joffe, Lauren Kim, Andre Rios  
Junior Content Writer Allison Gomes  
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  
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Director of HR John Keogh  
hr@remindermedia.com



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For more information about Good to Be Home magazine,  
please visit us at [www.remindermedia.com](http://www.remindermedia.com), email us at  
[info@remindermedia.com](mailto:info@remindermedia.com), or call us at 866-458-4226.  
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# Holiday Home *recovery*

written by: SHELLEY GOLDSTEIN



For many, the holidays are a hectic (but joyful) time for connecting with friends and family, hosting guests, and cooking heaps of food. Between the decorations, the clutter, and the stress of entertaining, it's no wonder people often feel overwhelmed and disorganized after it's all over. But with a little patience and a good plan, you can wrangle your home—and yourself—back into a more normal routine.

## Take a moment to decompress

After you've driven the last relative to the airport or hugged your friends goodnight after a long day of togetherness, make sure to sit down, relax, and recharge your batteries. Maybe that means having some hot tea and putting your feet up or watching an episode of the TV show you've been binge-watching.

Give yourself permission to do nothing for a few hours, or even a full day, before you start working on your to-do list.

## Tackle the gifts

Go around and remove any miscellaneous clutter like stray wrapping paper pieces, gift boxes, bags, or bows. Once you're left with clear floors, assess the new items that have entered your home via gift exchanges. This is a great time to implement the "one in, one out" rule of organization. For instance, if you received a couple of new sweaters, see if there are any items of clothing in your closet that you could swap out for them.

For any exchanges or returns that need to be made, print the labels and package items for drop-off. Taking care of this immediately will make you less likely to miss your return window.



## Put away holiday decor

To get your house back in order, begin taking down your decorations and stowing them in labeled storage containers and dismantle your artificial tree if you have one. For live-tree disposal, check your county website for information on curbside pickup or tree-recycling drop-off locations.

## Clean, clean, clean

If you've had guests staying with you, load their used linens and towels into the washing machine. Shake out and wash tablecloths, and put away any serving dishes and kitchen items you won't need until your next large gathering. Then go room by room, vacuuming and dusting until your house starts to resemble its preholiday self.

## Assess your food situation

The holidays usually include massive quantities of food and, therefore, leftovers. However, there's no rule that says you must eat all of them until they are gone. Take any pies and cookies to the office, or make up a meal for a

neighbor who doesn't have family nearby. You can also consider ways to repurpose leftovers into meals for the week, like making a turkey potpie or meatball sandwiches for your family or turkey sandwiches for kids' lunches. Organize your fridge so you can see what's in there and what needs to be eaten first, take stock of your pantry, and make a list of any staples you need to replenish at the grocery store.

## Reflect

While the memories are still fresh, write down some of your favorite moments or traditions from the holidays. Record the recipes and menus that worked well and would be good to repeat, noting which ones weren't quite hits. Also, send any videos or digital photos to family and friends so they can have those visual reminders of a wonderful holiday. And if you partake in thank-you-note writing, now is a great time to pen your appreciation and send off your handwritten messages.





# nashville's **Renovating Duo**

**interview with:** BROOKE AND BRICE GILLIAM

**written by:** LAUREN KIM

**photos courtesy of:** BROOKE AND BRICE GILLIAM



**A**fter getting discovered by Magnolia Network founders Chip and Joanna Gaines, married couple Brooke and Brice Gilliam launched their own home renovation show, *Making Modern*, on the network in 2021. Together they expertly juggle their television careers with running their build-and-design company and holding down separate full-time jobs. Here they share how they manage it all.



**You both have day jobs in addition to your company, Deep South Modern, and your show. How do you make it all work?**

*Brooke:* I'm a pharmaceutical rep, and Brice is an orthodontist. It's a daily challenge, but it's fun to see what we can accomplish. At the end of the day, we come together to decompress and go over our days, and we always feel we've done quite a lot.

**Brice, you do the designing while Brooke does the building. Does this swap of typical gender roles confuse people?**

*Brice:* All the time. It's funny because everyone has their stereotypes. Everybody we meet talks to me about construction and to her about design.

*Brooke:* People, not just women, have been told for so long what they should and shouldn't do. If you're passionate about something, it shouldn't matter what your gender is—just pursue it.

**How did your Nashville home build come about?** *Brice:* We chose to build our home a little north of the city in its inner loop. We wanted to take advantage of our lot's unobstructed views of the city; we can also see the river.



*Brooke:* We didn't have a great experience with our general contractor, though, so about halfway through, we took over building the house. I had just been laid off and was being paid a severance, which gave me time to go to the build site every day and watch as the tradesmen worked. They let me jump in and enjoyed teaching me; my grandfather also worked as a carpenter, so I learned a lot from him as well. Overall, it was a fun experience that turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

**Did an architect design your house?** *Brice:* I actually designed it myself on graph paper.

*Brooke:* An architect friend also helped us with it. We sent him Brice's

drawings, and he let us know what worked and what didn't. We created our house plans based on that process.

**How did you give your home's exterior its modern look?**

*Brice:* Our house is mostly composed of stucco and concrete, but we added some wood on the outside to soften its look a little.

*Brooke:* We also wanted to blend in the very traditional brick on one side of our home with the very modern look on the other.

**How would you describe your home's interior?** *Brice:* I'm a minimalist: everything should be in its place, and I don't want anything on the countertops. Brooke is the







opposite. She wants everything to be cozy and comfortable. Most of our home is very neutral and blends our two styles well—we add pops of color with pillows and other decor. I love all the natural light and the plants in our house too.

**How did you go from constructing your house to renovating and designing for others?** *Brice:* Our neighbors watched and cheered us on as we built our home, and once it was finished, they started asking us to work on their projects. Before we knew it, people we didn't know were reaching out to us. From there, our work blossomed into a full-time business.

**Do you do everything yourselves for your clients?** *Brooke:* I always bring in licensed and insured electricians and plumbers. You can burn a house down or flood it if you don't do that work correctly. Brice and I like to focus on the custom work for our clients.

**What's the best way to decorate a home?** *Brice:* It's important to curate it over time with personal things that mean something to you. You don't want to just purchase generic pieces from a big-box store. For instance, when you go on vacation, you could pick up a handmade bowl to put your keys in or a unique planter. These items can serve as both personal memories and unique decor. It's also important to use living plants because they are organic and literally filled with life—nature can be so inspiring and restorative.

**What advice do you have for new DIYers?** *Brooke:* Some projects you can do

yourself, and others are best left to the professionals. For example, putting up a kitchen backsplash is a DIY project a beginner can do. Also, if you don't have tools, you can rent them. That's what we did at first.

**Is it tough meshing your professional and personal lives?** *Brice:* It's not very difficult with our build-and-design company. But if she tried to work in my orthodontics office with me, it probably wouldn't work. *[Laughs]* I guess whenever she's the boss, it's OK.

*Brooke:* Yeah, I'm the boss because I'm now a licensed general contractor. At his office, he's the boss as the doctor, so it probably wouldn't go as well if I worked there.



**Do you think you'll ever quit your day jobs?**

*Brooke:* I don't know if we will. We enjoy our professional jobs, and we love our company and our show.

*Brice:* We often joke that we have three or four full-time jobs.

*Brooke:* It can be hard for us to shut down and slow down because there are always so many things happening at the same time. But we're learning to make lists and delegate to manage our time better. We rarely have downtime, so our goal is to set aside more hours for us to have time off together.

*For more info, visit [brookeandbrice.com](https://brookeandbrice.com) and [deepsouthmodern.co](https://deepsouthmodern.co)*



# *purchasing the* **PERFECT** **SOFA**

written by:  
BONNIE JOFFE

If your current sofa is no longer comfortable and supportive, its fabric has become worn and stained, its cushions have flattened, or your family has grown, it's time to start looking for a new one. But before you take the plunge, you should consider your lifestyle, room size, and budget. Whether you purchase it in-store or online, use the following guide to help you make the best decision.

## **MEASURE TWICE, ORDER ONCE**

When buying a sofa, it's critical to take precise measurements to ensure it will fit in the corner or along the wall where you plan on placing it. However, it is equally important to measure stairwells, doors, hallways, and ceiling heights, especially if you live in an older building or small apartment, to gauge if there's enough clearance to get the sofa inside.

Verifying how it's shipped, such as with detached feet or removable cushions, will help you determine this.

## **CHOOSE A SOFA TYPE**

Sofas run the gamut when it comes to form: you can choose from a standard sofa, a sectional, a love seat, a sofa bed, or a sofa in a box. Whether you lean toward an upright midcentury modern style or a relaxed Chesterfield design, you'll need to establish which looks the best to you, is the most comfortable, and appeals to your specific tastes.

## **FIND YOUR IDEAL FIT**

Consider how you generally use your sofa, asking yourself the following questions to achieve the perfect balance of form and function.





#### ***How comfortable is it?***

Comfort is probably the most important feature to assess when purchasing a sofa. If you're more likely to curl up and nap, go for a single-cushion option to prevent yourself from sinking between cushions. If you prefer to read or use your laptop, a higher seat with more back support might be best. For in-store shopping, test it as if you were at home; if you're purchasing it online, read through customer reviews to gauge comfort level ratings to help you make the most informed choice possible.

#### ***Is it easy to get on and off?***

Consider the heights of the people using the sofa most often. The rule of thumb is to be able to rest your feet on the floor while seated; this height can also help you have leverage when getting up. If you typically find that difficult or have an elderly family member, look for higher seats and firmer cushions; it's best to avoid cushions that are too soft, which could make it harder for you or your loved one to get up.



#### ***How many people should it fit?***

A large sectional is an excellent option if you have a bigger family or love to host sizeable gatherings. Depending on the configuration of your room, you could also try having two smaller couches or a sofa-and-armchair setup, which can offer the same amount of seating (or even more).

#### ***Is it durable?***

If your sofa will be in an area of the home that gets a lot of use, you may want to opt for a stronger frame. Solid wood frames are typically more durable than metal, for example. Before pulling the trigger, check the frame's construction specifications to make sure it'll be strong enough for your everyday needs in the long run.

#### ***What type of fabric do you need?***

Among the most important considerations when choosing a fabric are how it feels and its durability. For instance, if you have pets or young children in your home, you may want to choose a heavier-weight, stain-resistant fabric. Also, consider color and texture and whether it'll be exposed to sunlight, which can affect how quickly the fabric fades.

#### ***What's your budget?***

A sofa's size, construction, and fabric will largely dictate its price. Leather tends to be costlier than other fabrics like nylon, polyester, or velvet, and a sofa made from solid wood will have a higher price tag. Additionally, prices can vary widely from store to store and between brands, so don't be afraid to shop around to make sure you're getting the best sofa for you at the best deal.

***Because the sofa is often the centerpiece of a living room or family room, its style and comfort can be just as important as its price and durability. Be sure to consider these tips while on the hunt for your perfect sofa match.***





According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), over half a million people across the nation experienced homelessness on a single night in January 2022. This is a significant figure—but it doesn't have to be this way. As temperatures dip across

the nation, think of a few ways you can help people without safe and stable shelter get through winter. An excellent place to start is sharing your generosity with a local or national organization.

# impactful ways to support UNHOUSED PEOPLE

written by: ANDRE RIOS

## NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS (NAEH)

This organization believes that there is an end in sight for homelessness. To make this lofty goal a reality, it works hard to not only provide solutions for those in need but also prevent homelessness altogether. Donations to this service directly fund research into permanent housing, nonpartisan policies that favor affordable housing across the nation, the development of shelters in high-risk areas, and more. NAEH even creates programs to increase employment and income nationwide to help individuals afford steady housing.

*To learn more, visit [endhomelessness.org](https://endhomelessness.org)*



## NATIONAL COALITION FOR HOMELESS VETERANS (NCHV)

NCHV works tirelessly to support a group of individuals at high risk of experiencing homelessness: veterans of the armed forces. Donate to this organization to support projects such as policy efforts to get to the root of the epidemic of veteran homelessness, employment assistance, and a referral helpline

for at-risk or unhoused individuals. As the only national organization that focuses solely on unhoused veterans, it makes a tremendous impact across the country thanks in part to its generous donors. In fact, NCHV helped over 40,000 veterans achieve permanent housing in 2022 alone.

*To learn more, visit [nchv.org](https://nchv.org)*





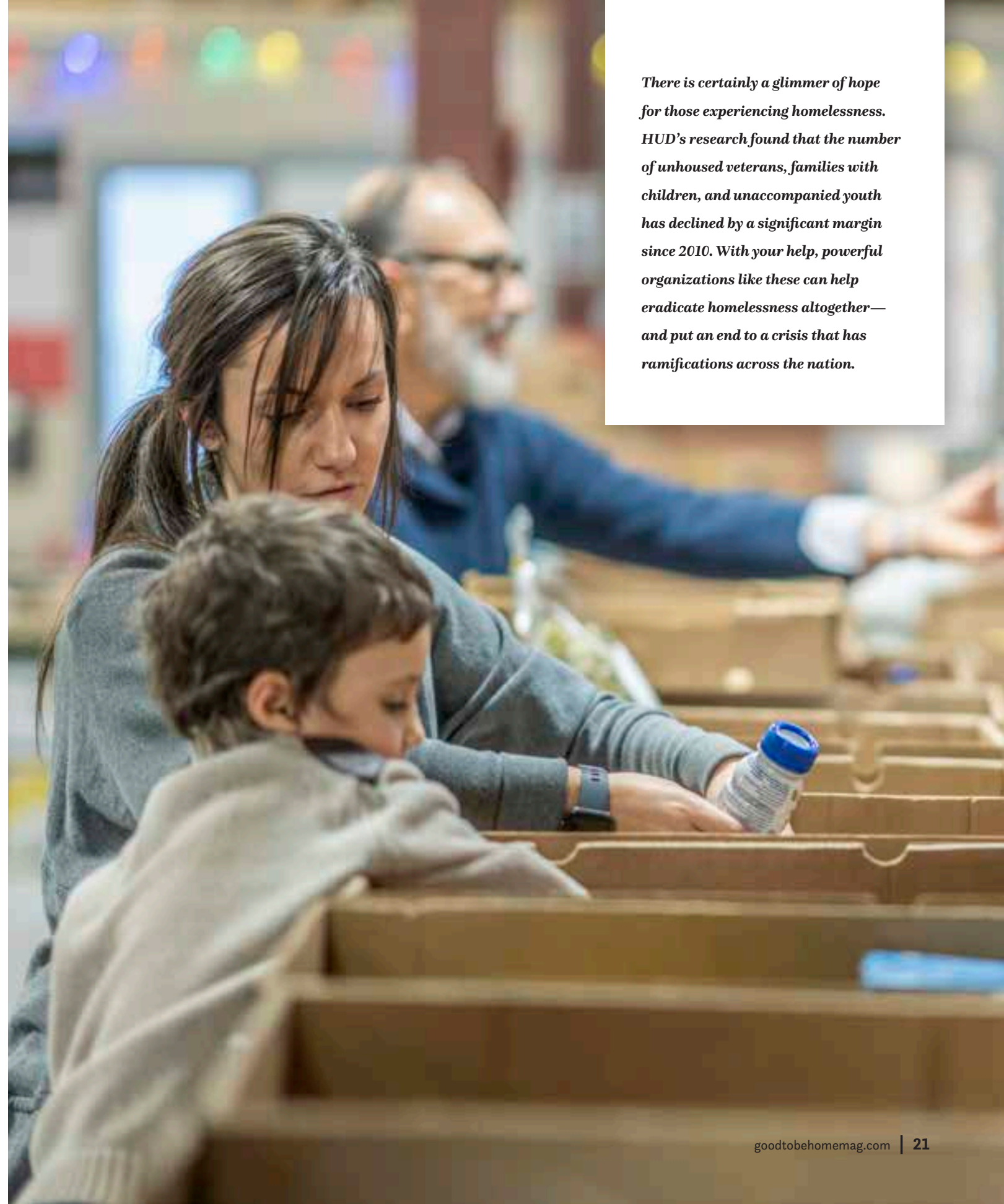
### TRUE COLORS UNITED

Cofounded by singer Cyndi Lauper, this organization works to help youth populations that disproportionately experience homelessness. While it does not operate shelters or food banks directly, it helps service providers across the nation “develop and implement systems at the community level to prevent youth homelessness.” These efforts include meeting with local government officials to address housing crises in their communities, opening twenty-four-hour drop-in centers, and ensuring community programs provide “inclusive and affirming spaces” for youth. *To learn more, visit [truecolorsunited.org](https://truecolorsunited.org)*

### LOCAL RESOURCES

Joining organizations near you can make a huge difference for unhoused folks in your community. If you’re short on altruistic funds or already give regularly to other charities, you can still donate your time by volunteering. Conduct a simple online search to identify local resources, then participate in services like food drives and shelter cleanups to make an instant impact on people in need.

You can also donate resources like nonperishable foods and clothing to these organizations or contribute essentials like toothpaste, shampoo, and feminine hygiene products. Give them a follow on social media, share their efforts with loved ones, and consider speaking to your employer about creating a volunteer or partnership initiative.



*There is certainly a glimmer of hope for those experiencing homelessness. HUD’s research found that the number of unhoused veterans, families with children, and unaccompanied youth has declined by a significant margin since 2010. With your help, powerful organizations like these can help eradicate homelessness altogether—and put an end to a crisis that has ramifications across the nation.*



# a fresh start

recipes by: SHEELA PRAKASH   photos by: KRISTIN TEIG, UNLESS NOTED



Every year, countless people vow to get healthier, and a good way to do so is by eating dishes bursting with fresh produce. Start the new year right by trying your hand at these simple, tasty recipes from the *Salad Seasons* cookbook.

Reprinted with permission from *Salad Seasons: Vegetable-Forward Dishes All Year* by Sheela Prakash © Rizzoli, 2023.

Photography © Kristin Teig.





# Wilted Cabbage

## and warm shallot salad | Serves 4

Cabbage might just be the humblest vegetable around. It sits patiently among all the other winter vegetables, often getting ignored. It's inexpensive and unassuming. When it's taken home, though, it gives and gives. A head of cabbage lasts forever in your refrigerator's crisper drawer and can be transformed into a countless number of cozy, wholesome dishes. This simple recipe is inspired by retro warm spinach salads, but instead of spinach, thinly sliced green cabbage is the star. It's tossed with a warm caramelized shallot dressing and paired with lots of nutty shaved Gruyère for a winter salad that's modest in the best way.

### Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 4 medium shallots, thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- ½ medium (2- to 3-pound) head green cabbage
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons honey
- 2 ounces Gruyère cheese, freshly shaved (about ⅔ cup), divided

### Instructions:

1. Heat the olive oil and butter in a medium skillet over medium heat until the butter melts. Add the shallots and garlic, season with a generous pinch of salt and several grinds of pepper, and cook, stirring frequently and reducing the heat if the shallots and garlic start to burn, until the shallots are very soft, caramelized, and deep golden brown, about 15 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, quarter, core, and thinly slice the cabbage cross-wise. Place in a large bowl. Sprinkle with a generous pinch of salt and massage with your hands to soften.
3. Once the shallots have caramelized, remove the skillet from the heat and whisk in the balsamic vinegar, red wine vinegar, Dijon, and honey.
4. Pour the shallot mixture over the cabbage and toss to coat and wilt. Taste and season with additional salt and pepper as needed. Add half of the shaved Gruyère and toss to distribute the cheese. Garnish with the remaining shaved Gruyère.







## Caramelized Fennel *and white bean salad* | Serves 4

Onions aren't the only vegetable you can caramelize. Thinly sliced fennel takes on the same deep golden color and softened texture when cooked slowly on the stovetop. Fennel's strong anise flavor also mellows when caramelized, and the vegetable becomes sweeter and more approachable. When tossed with creamy white beans and a simple garlicky dressing, the result is a balanced, satisfying bowl.

### **Ingredients:**

- 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 medium fennel bulbs, trimmed, quartered, and thinly sliced (reserve ½ cup of the feathery fronds)
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 clove garlic, grated or minced
- 2 (15-ounce) cans white beans, such as cannellini, drained and rinsed
- ½ cup dry white wine
- ½ small lemon, for serving

### **Instructions:**

1. Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add the fennel and thyme, season with ½ teaspoon salt and several grinds of pepper, and cook, stirring occasionally and reducing the heat if the fennel starts to burn, until soft and caramelized, about 25 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, whisk together the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil, the vinegar, Dijon, garlic, a generous pinch of salt, and several grinds of pepper in a large bowl. Add the white beans and toss to coat.
3. Once the fennel is caramelized, pour in the wine. Scrape up any browned bits on the bottom of the pan and continue to stir until the wine has evaporated, about 1 minute. Transfer the fennel to the bowl of beans and toss to combine.
4. Coarsely chop the reserved fronds, add them to the bowl, and toss to combine. Taste and season with additional salt and pepper as needed. Serve warm or at room temperature, squeezing the lemon over the salad just before serving.



# Shaved Pears and Chocolate

## *with amaretti crumble* | Serves 4

Crunchy Italian amaretti cookies, also called amaretti di Saronno, are a fun ingredient to play around with. While you can of course pair a couple with your espresso, they're so packed with bittersweet almond flavor, that's really just the beginning. You can grind them into a flour-like consistency to use in cakes, turn them into a crust for tarts or cheesecakes à la graham crackers, or add them to a fruit crumble topping. Using them as a crumble is the approach here, except you'll bake it separately to create sweet and crunchy contrast for a bowl of juicy shaved pears and dark chocolate. It's an understated dessert that feels special.

### **Ingredients:**

- 2 ounces small crunchy amaretti cookies (about eighteen 1¼-inch cookies)
- 3 tablespoons raw whole almonds
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon light or dark brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into cubes
- 2 firm but ripe medium pears, such as D'Anjou or Bosc (about 1 pound)
- Juice of ½ medium lemon (about 1½ tablespoons)
- 1 ounce bittersweet or dark chocolate (60% to 70% cacao)
- Extra-virgin olive oil, for serving
- Flaky sea salt, for serving

### **Instructions:**

1. Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Place the amaretti cookies in the bowl of a food processor fitted with the blade attachment. Pulse until coarsely ground, about 10 pulses. Add the almonds, flour, brown sugar, cinnamon, and kosher salt and pulse until the almonds just start to break up, about 8 pulses. Add the butter and pulse until large, heavy crumbs form and no dry spots remain, about 30 pulses.
3. Transfer the crumble mixture to the prepared baking sheet in a single layer, squeezing it into large clumps with your hands in the process. Bake, gently tossing halfway through, until golden brown and firm to the touch, 8 to 10 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, quarter, core, and very thinly slice the pears (there is no need to peel them unless you prefer to). Place in a large bowl, drizzle with lemon juice, and toss to coat. Transfer the pears to a serving bowl or platter.
5. Once the crumble is ready, let it cool for 10 minutes, then sprinkle it over the pears. Shave the chocolate with a vegetable peeler or paring knife over the top, then drizzle with a bit of olive oil and sprinkle with a few pinches of flaky sea salt.





# *a guide to building* **Real Estate Wealth**

written by: BONNIE JOFFE

REAL ESTATE IS OFTEN A DESIRABLE CHOICE FOR INVESTING BECAUSE OF ITS POTENTIAL TO GENERATE A RETURN ON INVESTMENT, DIVERSIFY YOUR FINANCIAL PORTFOLIO, AND POTENTIALLY IMPROVE YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE.

As an appreciating asset, it can also be a continuous source of generated income, whether you invest in residential, commercial, or undeveloped properties. And these investments can be short- or long-term, giving you the option to choose what's best for you.





Many people believe that to begin, you need a cash reserve, good credit, and assets. However, this is simply not true. You can get started with just a few hundred dollars when opening an escrow account, and if your funds are limited, you can secure financing from several sources, such as an FHA loan, a hard-money lender, a home equity line of credit, a personal loan, or a cash-out refinance. So if you’ve been thinking about entering the world of real estate investing, take the leap—with the right strategies and understanding, it can be an excellent way to invest in your future.

**Investment options**

The types of investments that follow are among the most

popular, but it can be helpful to discuss the best option for your specific situation with a real estate agent and financial advisor.

***House flipping***

Purchasing a run-down property or one located in a low-valued area (generally referred to as the worst-looking home in the nicest community) can be a great way to begin your investment career. However, while flipping a fixer-upper for a profit may seem easy on home renovation TV shows, it’s important to remember that the professionals on these shows have experience in navigating the complexities of such a project. So unless you’re an experienced contractor, it’s best to consult with a qualified one to help estimate what it will cost

to complete the project. Then you can decide if it will be profitable enough to fund your next investment.

***Commercial real estate***

You can invest in a variety of commercial real estate properties, such as shopping centers, warehouses, industrial parks, or dwellings that have five or more units. (Residential properties usually have only up to four.) There are many benefits to commercial investments, including a regular rental income stream, the potential to earn a higher income, less competition, and longer lease terms than a residential property.







***Lease options***

If you're a first-time homebuyer without enough cash or credit to buy a home through a bank or lender, this arrangement is the perfect way to get started in the world of real estate. The owner will not only rent their property to you but also give you the option to buy it at a preset price when the lease agreement ends. This could provide you with more time to save money and build your credit to qualify for a loan.

***Long-term rentals***

Investing in real estate through the buy-and-hold strategy is a traditionally popular method. The goal is to make the property an appreciating asset that will build your real estate portfolio. When selecting a property, the most important consideration is location: the more desirable the location, the higher the future rental income and potential selling price.



***Vacation rental***

Investing in a vacation rental can be incredibly lucrative. However, before you make a purchase, weigh its potential as rental income versus its costs, which include the purchase price, maintenance, and fees associated with its ownership. Also, research the local market to determine the best time to purchase and when to raise rental prices to make your investment worthwhile.

*To help you better understand investing and how to make the most of it, seek outside resources such as a real estate investment class. A real estate agent is also a valuable asset to help you on your journey from start to finish.*



# HOW TO Tend to Your *winter* Landscape

written by: ANDRE RIOS

Winter's signature sights delight the senses, whether you witness a soft coat of snow, an icicle fringe dangling from your roof's edge, or a cool, gray evening sky. But the season also offers another less appealing sight: dull and dreary landscaping. What's a proud homeowner to do when the yard they worked so hard to maintain all year rewards them with unsightly winter coloring?

Every season has particular landscaping demands, including the coldest one. With a few tasks, though, you can develop a durable landscape that resists the winter chill. Follow these tips to help keep your yard healthy in winter so it sings in spring.



## What happened to my yard?

First, it's important to understand why exactly your yard may look less appealing in winter. "Like a bear in hibernation, perennial plants take advantage of winter as a much-needed period of rest," writes the Jobe's Company, a Texas-based garden supply brand. In other words, your yard may appear to be dead on the surface, but it's actually just saving energy. Therefore, your primary goal during this season should be to protect your already stressed landscaping and let it rest undisturbed.

## Lawn care

You probably don't enjoy waking up to the sound of a lawn mower, so give your grass the same courtesy while it sleeps. Generally, experts recommend against cutting your grass once temperatures dip consistently below 50 degrees; only mow on a warm, dry day when there is no residual moisture. Throughout the season, pick up any loose leaves and other debris that may collect on your lawn. Doing so can help ensure that your grass gets ample sunlight and air while it rests.

Also, avoid using salt or artificial deicing agents on your walkways and driveways, which may wash into your lawn, contaminating your soil and injuring your plants. Try less caustic abrasives like sand or calcium chloride. And if your grass is still green, and therefore not hibernating, feed it a light dose of nitrogen fertilizer late in winter to promote greener regrowth in spring.



## Tending to flowers and shrubs

Avoid pruning dead growth or picking the rare blooming flower; doing so can expose the delicate inner layers of the plant to frigid air. For cozier rest, blanket the roots of your shrubs and flowering plants with mulch, which can lock in warmth and moisture. You should also safeguard your plants, especially if they aren't native to your region, against harsh winter storms by temporarily covering them in burlap. This material is light enough to let in moisture and sunlight but dense enough to keep the plants warm.

## Winter tree care

Believe it or not, evergreens may still want their thirst quenched in winter, particularly if your region is short on rain and snow. Water these trees occasionally, using a hose if possible to help keep surrounding plants dry, but don't allow moisture to collect on the surface of the soil. Share the hydration with your other trees and plants a few times a month as well. "Even though remaining plants are dormant during the winter, it's still important that they receive the water they—specifically, their roots—need to stay alive," Jobe's notes.

If you have fruit trees, prune dead or dry growth in late winter, and spray them with dormant oil, which will protect them from pests that may unfortunately still be active this season. Apply according to the product's directions.

## Get a helping hand

Winter landscaping can be a challenge, especially for climate-sensitive plants like vines and herb gardens. If you face serious yard care challenges, keep a horticulturist's contact info handy. This expert will happily lend a hand if you have concerns about a particular plant species or need to bring your lawn back from the brink.





# A magical MURALIST

interview with: RACHEAL JACKSON  
written by: LAUREN KIM  
photos courtesy of: RACHEAL JACKSON



Artist Racheal Jackson painted her first mural as a low-budget way to decorate her home. Now she designs and paints colorful masterpieces for homeowners and businesses across the United States and her work is featured on the Magnolia Network home design show *Artfully Designed*.

**Tell us about your show:** It's based in Charlotte, North Carolina, and I stay there full-time while filming; my husband and kids join me as much as possible. I love working with my costars, Natalie Papier and Frankie Zombie, who are amazing at using color and texture—engaging in the creative process together feels like magic. I also adore working with the film crew. In another life, I could be happy as a production assistant running errands and helping behind the scenes.

**Are you surprised that you're on TV?** Thirteen-year-old Racheal, who watched the *Christopher Lowell Show* and wore her best clothes to Universal Studios hoping to be “discovered,” would tell you that it's all part of the plan. The Racheal of five years ago with three children, a biology degree she wasn't using, and a house full of gray walls, would be floored. Today, I'm delighted with the opportunities that come from putting myself and my work out there.

**How did you start painting your murals?** I didn't have a budget for wallpaper, so I got some sample paint pots and created my first mural by painting two full walls of diagonal stripes. Then I started painting murals in every room—I loved it because they changed the feel of the spaces so quickly. Soon after, a friend in Chicago asked me to paint a mural in her house and someone else in North Carolina hired me to do one for them. I've been jetting across the United States painting murals ever since. I painted fifty of them in one year, including a handful for myself.







***What's your creative process?*** First, I'll create the mural design in Adobe Illustrator. I'll then transfer it to a wall using one of a variety of techniques. Sometimes I use a projector, a level, a pencil, and string; sometimes I employ a grid or a doodle method. On average, it takes me about one to three days to paint a mural.

***Is your home filled with your artwork?*** By the time we moved out of our old house in 2021, every room had at least one mural. But our new home required so much work before we could do the pretty stuff. I forgot the impact having strong focal points and good color on the walls can have. Going through the process of painting them has made me so happy.

***What projects have you completed for your new home?*** We completely renovated the kitchen. We installed red-oak cabinets with flat fronts that look beautiful and

modern, added new terrazzo countertops, and bought new appliances, including a brown Big Chill stove that looks like it's from the 1960s. We're keeping our old refrigerator, but I probably will cover it with paintable wallpaper and paint it.

We added the same flooring in the kitchen and surrounding living spaces; it's shiny white vinyl composition tile, or what you'd see in a Target or an elementary school. It fits the house. But to install it, we had to demolish our brick fireplace, which had a big footprint and was surrounded by orange shag carpeting from the 1970s. Once all that was gone, I built and tiled a faux fireplace to give us a place to hang our Christmas stockings.

We discovered it would cost about \$10,000 to have the exterior painted, so I bought a \$500 paint sprayer and \$1,500 worth of paint and painted a few ten-to-fifteen-foot-wide stripes on our house in multiple colors.







The mural is so much fun, and the neighborhood kids love it. If people can't find my house, I can just tell them it's the one with the stripes. Exterior murals are always my favorites because they get great light and I can use punchier colors.

***Did you give the kitchen in your prior home a unique look too?*** I decorated one end of the kitchen island with my kids' LEGOs; I wedged the pieces between some trim rather than gluing them. I loved its playful look. We sold the house with the LEGO design intact because the new owners wanted to keep them on the kitchen island. It just goes to show you that don't have to be too serious with home design.

***Is it a lot of work to get surfaces ready for your murals?*** When I'm painting the exterior of a house, the prep work is exhausting. I have to cover all the windows and use my pressure washer to get the dirt off since it must be clean before I can start painting. But the prep work is minimal when I'm painting a mural on an interior wall.

***How would you describe the style of your murals?*** They tend to be geometric and abstract with hard lines. I also like painting colorful squiggles, botanical murals, and plaids and working with very bright colors.

***Does your family also enjoy murals?*** My husband might have preferred a neutral style for our home, but after living with murals for so many years, he loves them now. We painted his office, the first room we finished in our new house, a bright blue. He even added his own mural to it—it's very stylized and colorful. My kids have also asked if they can paint their own. My youngest gave me sketches of the one he wants in his room.

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



# WHAT IS YOUR VASE

# Personality?

written by: SHELLEY GOLDSTEIN

Vases are one of the most ubiquitous types of decor in a home—and for good reason. They can command a table, completely transform a shelf, and infuse a room with personality. If you are feeling bored with your home’s style, adding or swapping out a vase is an easy way to reinvigorate a space. The only question is: What is your vase personality?

## ◀ THE TRADITIONALIST

Your first order of business is to point out that “vase” rhymes with “laws” rather than “lace” because, even though you are not British, pronouncing words as if you are a duke or duchess makes you feel complete. You also need everyone to understand the rules of vases: they should be symmetrical, made of glass, and vase shaped. *Try a pair or trio of glass vases with a couple of large roses in each for a classic look.*



photo by: LARISA BIRTA, via Unsplash

## THE MAXIMALIST ▼

You live in a rental, but you still painted your living room pink because you are a Gobstopper in a world of Milk Duds. You see decor as frosting on a perfectly layered cake, so when you buy a vase, it better have polka dots or stripes (or both!). *Go bold with a vibrant bouquet of gerberas, lilies, and irises that contrast with the vessel.*



photo by: DELANEY VAN, via Unsplash

## THE ORGANIC

You have a capsule wardrobe that consists of a dozen tank tops in various shades of dirt. You’re about to head out to forage for mushrooms with a tote bag that says “Get Mossed.” Amorphous pieces that look like they could have been crafted in an eighth-grade pottery class but are actually expensive call your name. *Group these calming and textural pieces together, and add one or two hydrangeas. Go with some fuzzy fronds like pussy willows if the vase is tall and cylindrical or lily of the valley if it’s shorter.*

## ◀ THE UPCYCLER

You currently have a family-sized pickle jar soaking in a sink full of suds preparing for its new role as a holder of grain. Sure, there are six other empty glass jars in your cabinet right now, but you can never have too many. Some people see an empty coffee can, but you see aluminum potential. *Add a little yellow paint, and you’ve got yourself a sunny vase for a new plant. Just don’t forget to punch some drainage holes in the bottom first.*

## THE ART COLLECTOR

You like to throw around words like *curate*, *edited*, and *aesthetics*. You often appear lost in thought as if contemplating your life’s purpose but are actually thinking of the perfect comeback to say to that stranger arguing with you on the internet. When people ask what you do for a living, you answer cryptically, “I’m a creative” while looking aloof in black skinny jeans. You only own one vase, and it took you two weeks of research to decide on it. *You’re allergic to flowers, but the vase looks impeccable empty. (If you do not have this issue, fill it with monochromatic blooms.)*

## THE GRANDMA ▼

Who needs modern vases when you can use a teapot that looks like pink porcelain and a quilt had a baby? If it’s cool enough for the Golden Girls, it’s going in your house. You live for crocheted blankets and a good doily. Kitsch is your middle name, and you spend weekends scouting out vintage wares at local estate sales. *Teapots are shallow, so choose flowers that have short stems and a compact, round design like peonies or ranunculus. Balance your big blooms with baby’s breath or some other airy flower.*



photo by: MELANIE OLIVER, via Pexels

*Don’t let these vase personalities contain you—you can be any of them or all of them! You can also try being a new one each season depending on what flowers are inspiring you in the moment.*





# DIY Home-Warming **SOLUTIONS**

written by: MATTHEW BRADY

Home heating costs have skyrocketed over the past few years, with little relief in sight. Rather than shake your fist at your energy bill this winter, take control of it by making simple, cost-effective changes that can help you keep your home warm without burning through your wallet. (Prices that follow may vary by location.)

## **Seal, seal, seal** (cost: \$3–\$15 per unit)

The number one way cold air enters a home is through cracks and loose seals around windows and doors. Applying caulk and weather stripping is an easy solution for this big problem.

## **Add film** (\$15–\$30)

Speaking of windows, don't forget about the panes themselves. With most window film, you simply cut it, tape it, and then seal it to the pane with a hair dryer to help keep the cold out all winter long.

## **Buy a snake** (<\$10–\$25)

A common solution to drafty doors is a draft stopper, sometimes called a snake because of its appearance. Just attach it to or place it in front of an exterior door to block the cold while also adding a touch of style.

## **Lower your thermostat** (Free)

Energy.gov recommends setting your thermostat to 68 degrees for the best combination of comfort and savings. In fact, turning it back 7–10 degrees from its normal nightly setting year-round can save you an estimated 10 percent on energy costs.

## **Prevent heating barriers** (Free)

Your heating system works hard to keep your whole house warm, and a simple step to ensure its efficiency is to give it space. Check that your furniture isn't blocking the heat source in each room, especially if you have floor vents.

## **Be intentional with shades** (Free)

Sunlight is our planet's free heat source, so take advantage of it by opening your curtains and blinds on sunny days and closing them on dark days and at night. Also, remember to swap in thicker seasonal curtains to further keep the cold out.

## **Turn on ceiling fans** (Free)

If you have ceiling fans, running them clockwise while on low will pull cool air up and push warm air down, making your rooms more comfortable.



# Front of Tear Out Card 2

SHAVED PEARS AND CHOCOLATE WITH  
*Amaretti Crumble*

2 oz. small crunchy amaretti cookies (about eighteen 1¼-in. cookies)

3 tbsp. raw whole almonds

2 tbsp. all-purpose flour

1 tbsp. light or dark brown sugar

¼ tsp. ground cinnamon

¼ tsp. kosher salt

2 tbsp. cold unsalted butter, cut into cubes

2 firm but ripe medium pears, such as D'Anjou or Bosc (about 1 lb.)

Juice of ½ medium lemon (about 1½ tbsp.)

**Ingredients continued on back**



Stacey Shanner

**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

**Ingredients continued**

1 oz. bittersweet or dark chocolate (60% to 70% cacao)

Extra-virgin olive oil, for serving

Flaky sea salt, for serving

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Place the amaretti cookies in the bowl of a food processor fitted with the blade attachment. Pulse until coarsely ground, about 10 pulses. Add the almonds, flour, brown sugar, cinnamon, and kosher salt and pulse until the almonds just start to break up, about 8 pulses. Add the butter and pulse until large, heavy crumbs form and no dry spots remain, about 30 pulses.
3. Transfer the crumble mixture to the prepared baking sheet in a single layer, squeezing it into large clumps with your hands in the process. Bake, gently tossing halfway through, until golden brown and firm to the touch, 8 to 10 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, quarter, core, and very thinly slice the pears (there is no need to peel them unless you prefer to). Place in a large bowl, drizzle with lemon juice, and toss to coat. Transfer the pears to a serving bowl or platter.
5. Once the crumble is ready, let it cool for 10 minutes, then sprinkle it over the pears. Shave the chocolate with a vegetable peeler or paring knife over the top, then drizzle with a bit of olive oil and sprinkle with a few pinches of flaky sea salt.

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Stacey is the best of the best! Our family was very pleased with her services, especially Snowball, our little pup! She listened to all of our concerns, wants, needs, and dreams. Stacey is totally awesome! I will be sharing her information with everyone that I know.



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*The Austin Family*  
Manayunk

Stacey is truly a very impressive person. She works fast, efficiently, and effectively. Her services are top of the line and we were very satisfied with her work. We love Stacey!



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Direct: (866) 458-4226  
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